Chelsea take a quick-slow route to victory

David Lacey

IN ESSENCE, this season's FA Cup final was a story of the quick and the dead. It was distinguished by the fastest goal ever scored in a Wembley final. It was let down by Chelsea's reluctance to dance on Middlesbrough's grave.

Once Roberto Di Matteo put them ahead after 43 seconds, all Chelsea had to do was keep the ball, hold their shape and retain their discipline. When Middlesbrough lost Fabrizio Ravanelli and Robbie Mustoe in five minutes midway through the first half the match became as near a no-contest as any FA Cup final is likely to see.

The situation demanded that Chelsea's rich array of multinational talent put on a show, but prudence dictated otherwise. The game was put on the back-burner in a hot, humid stadium until Eddie Newton's late goal completed a victory for Chelsea which had long appeared inevitable. It was a particularly happy moment.

Three years earlier Newton's ill-timed tackle on Denis Irwin led to the first of the two penalties from which Eric Cantona set up Manchester United for a 4-0 win over Chelsea at Wembley. The Chelsea midfielder is an honest, hard-working player and this was a redemption richly deserved.

Otherwise those who had looked forward to a demonstration of the more profound footballing arts from Chelsea's overseas players had to be satisfied with vignettes, with much technically accomplished though inconsequential play in between. Gianfranco Zola made one bewitching run through the defence in the second half and later provided an exquisite final touch for Newton's goal, but was mainly just part of the scenery.

Looked at in broader terms, however, it was still an impressive display by Chelsea promising much for next season, both in the Premiership and the European Cup Winners' Cup. In becoming the first foreign manager to lead a side to victory in an FA Cup final — Chelsea's first at Wembley and their second in all — Ruud Gullit showed it is possible to blend overseas technique with British strength and stamina and produce a measured, restrained performance often seen abroad when the superior team take an early lead.



Kings of the road . . . Di Matteo, Newton and Wise celebrate at Wembley PHOTOGRAPH: DAN CHUNG

For although Wembley's appetite for the dramatic was whetted by Di Matteo, it would have been all too easy for Chelsea to go gung-ho and allow even Middlesbrough's debilitated, relegated team a glimpse of salvation. That this did not happen was due to the solid defending of the two Franks, Leboeuf and Sinclair, and of Steve Clarke and Scott Minto, along with the alertness in goal of Frode Grodas, for whom the crucial moment was delayed until the 79th minute.

Then Juninho caught Chelsea unawares with a sharp free-kick and Steve Vickers was through on goal, only for Grodas, who had been quick to narrow the angle, to block his shot feet-first.

The only other occasion on which Middlesbrough came remotely close to scoring, apart from Gianluca Festa's disallowed header on the stroke of half-time, was in the 64th minute when Mikkel Beck's backheader forced a rare error from Leboeuf and Festa shot wide.

The fact that Middlesbrough's two chances both fell to centre-backs reflected the thinness of their options once Ravanelli and Mustoe had departed. They were replaced by Beck and Vickers, the latter joining Nigel Pearson in the middle of defence with Festa pushed into midfield.

Without Ravanelli, Boro had no natural foil for Juninho, who was hunted down remorselessly by the opposition and when he did find space in promising positions was let down by the movement around him.

For Middlesbrough the biggest disappointment, all too predictably, was their other Brazilian, the somnambulant Emerson. Yet the greater responsibility lay with Festa for not advancing to meet Di Matteo.

As Mark Hughes became the first player this century to collect a fourth FA Cup winner's medal, Middlesbrough earned an unhappy place in the competition's history as the fourth club to lose in the final and be relegated from the top division in the same season. The others were Manchester City (1926), Leicester (1969) and Brighton (1983).

Cryptic crossword by Fawley

Across

1 Timer — best among batch of samples (9)
6 Magistrate has European double in vehicle (4)
10 Portrayed looking gaunt (5)
11 Able to interpret signs of a bug, I'll shuffle round at home (9)
12 Awkward situation after vital type of surgery? (7)
13 Still dancing about on climbing-frame (7)
14 Provoke attitude adopted during angry misunderstandings (5-8)
17 One supporting slip, perhaps, takes responsibility for catch (8-5)
21 A bird cryptically defined as "flighty female" (7)
22 Overheard assignation with an operatic hero (7)
24 Maybe newspaper magazine's cut first half of yarn (9)
25 Start being keen on bridging river (5)
26 Does Shakespearian spot — finale of Macbeth (4)
27 US writer has pot of beer by Northern stream (9)

Down

1 Close associate in team given the boot? (8)
2 Nothing has to change source of eggs (5)
3 Checking what's on sale, jumping lights at first (6-8)
4 Able to interrupt most of tense artistic arrangement (7)
5 Racing driver, the best, having minor peak (7)
7 Vital stage reached in the draw? (9)
8 European sophistication (6)
9 Likely to be accused, given less than a hint (5,9)
15 Hunt goals, switching to attack (9)
16 Easily understood sort of public reserve (4,4)
18 Learner frets, missing first in heavy traffic (7)
19 In this context, remember what fanatics are like (7)
20 Raise enough cash for a fine car (6)
23 The right heading (5)

Last week's solution

S	P	R	A	W	L	S		I	N	C	U	B	U	S
I		O		A		I		N		R		R		W
F	R	U	I	T		N	E	C	T	A	R	I	N	E
T		N		E		C		U		B		G		E
E	L	D	E	R	B	E	R	R	Y		S	H	U	T
R		S		M				S		W		T		P
				E	N	G	L	I	S	H	R	O	S	E
P		U		L		R		V		A		N		A
I	M	P	R	O	V	E	M	E	N	T				
L		S		N		E				A		R		A
L	I	E	D		I	N	C	O	N	S	T	A	N	T
O		T		C		G		C		H		S		T
C	U	T	S	A	D	A	S	H		A	P	P	L	E
K		H		R		G		R		N		E		N
S	H	E	A	T	H	E		E	M	E	N	D	E	D

Au revoir by Eric the Red

Martin Thorpe

HE WAS banned for swearing at a football coach, throwing his shirt at a referee and kicking a spectator. He once hit his own team-mate; later he lifted seagulls and trawlers from oceanic obscurity.

But on Sunday Eric Cantona produced the biggest shock in his controversial career by announcing his retirement from the game, six days before his 31st birthday.

"I have played professional football for 13 years," said the proud and enigmatic Frenchman: "I have always planned to retire when I was at the top, and at Manchester United I have reached the pinnacle of my career. I now wish to do other things."

Cantona may see his future in the arts. He has long expressed a desire to become a director, and has recently financed the run of a stage play in Paris. He also appeared in a film, Le Bonheur Est Dans le Pré.

He bows out having just picked up a fourth championship title medal with United, having earlier won one with Leeds, an impressive portfolio of success.

"In the last 4½ years I have enjoyed my best football," Cantona said. "I have had a marvellous relationship with everyone at the club, not least the fans, and I wish Manchester United even more success in [the] future."

When the imperious forward with the turned-up collar arrived at United for £1.2 million in 1992 he proved the missing piece in a side straining to bring the title to Old Trafford for the first time in 26 years.

United's manager, Alex Ferguson, said on Sunday: "It's a sad day . . . Eric has had a huge impact on the development of our younger players.

"He is one of the most gifted and dedicated players I have had the pleasure of working with. Whenever fans discuss United's greatest side, you can be sure that for many Eric's name will be high up on the list.

"He leaves with our best wishes. He has given us so many wonderful memories."

Andy Walsh, secretary of the Independent Manchester United Supporter's Association, said "I don't think there has been a player in my lifetime who has had a greater rapport with the fans.

"Eric was one of us; he loved the game. He has been tremendous not just for this club but English football in general. He brought a touch of magic to the pitch but if you met him on a night out he would always speak to you. He always had time for people who loved the game."

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Iranian youth cheer vote for change

YOUNG Iranians gave out flowers and sweets in Revolution Square last weekend to celebrate the overwhelming mandate for change given to Mohammed Khatami in his presidential election victory, *writes Kathy Evans in Tehran.*

About 29 million people out of a total electorate of 33 million voted last week; of those 20 million voted for Mr Khatami. His nearest rival, Nateq Nouri, the powerful Speaker of parliament, won 5 million votes, a result which many analysts saw as a rebuff to the elderly radical clerics of Qom who backed him.

Yet the outgoing president, Hashemi Rafsanjani, denied that the huge vote for Mr Khatami could be considered a protest vote against the system of strict controls that govern social life and freedom of speech in Iran.

However, people were already predicting that the size of Mr Khatami's vote would embolden young people to reject the system. "The Khatami vote shows they want change quickly and both sides could get aggressive. There could be a backlash from the revolutionary police forces," a psychologist said.

A Tehran mother reported that her eight-year-old returned from school last Sunday saying the girls had spent the morning discussing when they were going to rip off their headscarves. In Iran, girls have to wear Islamic cover from the age of nine.

But as the celebration rallies by students began, police were busy maintaining dress and behaviour codes. In one incident a woman was seen being stopped in her car and taken away for wearing make-up.

The apparatus that controls public morals in Iran is huge, involving thousands of regime loyalists. Private morals are the domain of the civil police, but other volunteer squads, such as the Bassij, are also involved.

Another prominent force is the Elimination of Vice and Propagation of Virtue Squad, and its detention centre in north Tehran was busy as usual.

It is unlikely that Mr Khatami will be able, or even want, to stop the activities of the moral police forces. He has to work with a parliament dominated by conservatives and also with the Guardians' Council, a body of traditional rightwing clerics.

Mr Rafsanjani could play a key role in his new post as head of the Expediency Council, which mediates between parliament and the Guardians' Council, and advises the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

Washington Post, page 15

Chirac sacks Juppé after poll disaster

Paul Webster in Paris

FRANÇE'S Gaullist prime minister, Alain Juppé, was forced to take the blame for the rightwing coalition's dismal showing in the snap general election last Sunday and will resign next week whatever the result in the second round of voting on June 1.

President Jacques Chirac told Mr Juppé on Monday that he could continue the campaign but should start clearing out his office immediately.

Mr Chirac's decision ended one of the most loyal partnerships in politics. Mr Juppé, a former foreign minister and current mayor of Bordeaux, had been handed the leadership of the Gaullist RPR movement by the president before being appointed prime minister in 1995.

Mr Chirac's stubbornness in keeping Mr Juppé in power, despite one of the worst post-war popularity ratings, was a fundamental cause of the first-round setback, which indicated that the government will lose well over 200 of its 480 National Assembly seats to the left. The Socialists under Lionel Jospin were the biggest winners in last Sunday's poll, with 23.5 per cent of the vote.

Mr Chirac now requires a brilliant balancing act before the June 1 run-off. He must nominate a replacement for Mr Juppé, rally first-round abstainers disillusioned with his government's austerity programme, and juggle the threat from the far right.

With a record national average of 15 per cent of the poll, the National Front can field 133 candidates on June 1. Its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, inspired by his contempt for Mr Chirac, has said that even if his candidates have no chance of winning, they should stand to split the rightwing vote.

The French stock exchange signalled its belief that the left will win with a drop of more than 3 per cent in share values on Monday. The fall reflected a fear of militant leftwing policies after the Communist leader, Robert Hue, said his party was certain it could do a deal on shared government with the Socialists.

Mr Jospin also has to consider posts for Les Verts, the only green movement with a substantial score. As part of a leftwing alliance, up to six green candidates could be returned, led by Dominique Voynet, who is in line for a ministerial post.

Mr Chirac meanwhile surveys the ruins of his own making. For two years he has been unsuccessfully defying predictions that he will be the worst head of state in the fifth republic. His immediate predecessor, François Mitterrand, forecast that within months of coming to power, the Gaullist leader would be a political laughing stock. Earlier, another former president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, warned that Mr Chirac's impetuousness would land the whole nation in trouble. From this week it can be said that both forecasts have come true: Mr Chirac has undermined his own authority by an injudicious gamble, and France's international influence has been seriously diminished.

With this snap election and his feeble, indecisive interventions in the campaign, Mr Chirac has already thrown away one of the most secure power bases in history. Except for a loose demand for popular support as France negotiated the next stage of the single currency saga, he never explained why he risked discarding a 400-seat majority in the National Assembly a year before the planned election date.

The best guess as to what brought on Chirac's folly was a personal lack of confidence in his standing as a statesman. His two years in office have been marked by unreliability and self-doubt, and his promises to buy France's way out of recession were dropped under pressure from the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, in the pursuit of a single currency remedy.

In a country where popular discontent has been expressed violently since 1789, Mr Chirac is unlikely to escape confrontation with the masses unless he capitulates to pressure for a socially-inspired programme and so publicly admits that he has been running the country badly until now.



Down and out in Paris . . . Alain Juppé after announcing he would step down PHOTOGRAPH: GAEL CORNIER

Comment, page 12

England and Wales top crime league

Alan Travis

ENGLAND and Wales have a worse crime record than nearly every other major industrialised nation — including the United States — according to a new international survey.

The survey of crime victims in 11 countries shows that people in England and Wales are the most likely to be victims of crime and face the highest risks of being burgled or having their car stolen in the industrialised Western world.

It also shows that England and Wales have as high a level of "contact crime" — which covers robbery, assaults, and sexual attacks on women — as has the US, with people in both countries facing roughly the same risk of attack. This is about three out of 100 people each year.

These findings show that the legacy of Michael Howard's time as Home Secretary is a country which is described by the official international survey as still "one of the most pressured by crime" in the Western world.

At best the survey shows that the former Conservative government only managed to "stabilise" a crime rate which had more than doubled between 1979 and 1991. At the same time, the risk of becoming a crime victim was actually reduced in the US and Canada.

The preliminary findings of the 1996 International Crime Victimisation Survey were reported to a European Union conference in the Netherlands last month. The full results will not be published until July.

The survey, which has been running since 1989, is regarded as one of the most authoritative international comparisons of crime.

It is based on interviews in 11 industrialised countries: England and Wales, the US, Sweden, Finland, Canada, Scotland, Switzerland, France, Netherlands, Austria and Northern Ireland.

Its findings show that the Netherlands and England and Wales are jointly the most prone to crime of the countries surveyed, followed by Switzerland, Scotland, France, Canada, the US, Sweden, Finland, Austria, and finally Northern Ireland.

When this league table is adjusted to take account of the "seriousness" of the crimes committed, England and Wales actually come out at the top of the league table with the Netherlands second.

Britain's new Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said the survey showed "the record of complacency of the 18-year period of the Conservative administration".

Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK18	Norway	NK 18
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 0.30

A closed mind on the changing face of Germany

IT IS obvious that the German interior minister, Manfred Kanther, cannot appreciate the gross irony in his statement dismissing the extension of citizenship for the de facto Germans classified as foreigners (Germans begin to bridge ethnic divide, May 18).

By the absurd assertion that citizenship would not make the slightest difference because "a child of immigrants may feel [sic] foreign . . . because he has a different religion, skin of a different colour, speaks poor German or is treated badly", Mr Kanther is refracting and, not inadvertently, legitimising the highly suspect ideological conception of nationality based on "blood" and "race" lines. His implication is that there is no significant degree of racism in Germany and that the discrimination, indignation and attacks that "foreigners" experience is either an exaggerated psychological reaction or is due to their natural inability to gel with the real German people. Never mind the all too evident cultural and moral depravities of racism and vulgar nationalism.

If the issuing of passports is of no consequence then Kanther really should see no problem in them being issued to the millions of de facto Germans who are contributing greatly to the country's economy and culture. Besides, in a culture that has made Baywatch star David Hasslehoff a singing superstar, a certain amount of cultural enrichment is warranted.

Amir Mirza,
Boston, USA

GERMAN Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his interior minister, Manfred Kanther, are deceiving themselves in maintaining that Germany is not a nation of immigrants. But their mantra-like repetition of this phrase does not alter the fact that precisely the opposite is the case. Dual nationality for Turks and other foreigners in Germany would, of course, be a start — if an imperfect one — to their integration here. With this hope, a bill was recently introduced into the Bundesrat (the upper house in the parliament) designed to grant citizenship to third generation "foreign" children born in Germany and allowing them to retain any other existing nationality.

Should the bill become law, the problems of foreigners in Germany will not be solved overnight. A Turk with a German passport will still be just a Turk to a policeman, town hall official or a rightwing extremist, but at least such naturalised foreigners would have an automatic right to all social welfare and other benefits.

The claim that dual nationality causes dual loyalty is hypocritical. Neither German law nor the possession of a German passport has any practical influence on which country a person is loyal to — every individual makes this decision for himself. And we should not forget that Germans who emigrate to countries permitting dual or even multiple citizenship are not slow to take up foreign citizenship themselves while still retaining their German nationality — something that we never hear about in Germany.

There is certainly an argument for enacting legislation to limit immigration to fixed quotas according to strict economic criteria. The points system currently operating in New Zealand might be a suitable model.

G R A McMurray,
Oftersheim, Germany

Glowing myths of empire

SIMON HEFFER'S eulogy for the British empire (Last glow of empire as the sun sets in east, May 11) is historical nonsense.

Heffer bases his view that the British were "model imperialists" on John Keay's Last Post, which is restricted to southeast Asia. Mentioning a Dutch massacre, he asserts that the British "managed to avoid perpetrating any such excesses in this region" (that is, in the relatively small Malaya). But in 1919 the British Raj massacred 379 men, women, and children in Amritsar.

Heffer claims that "rarely, too, did the British outstay their welcome". In fact, they were never welcomed anywhere in the first place. They periodically put down rebellions from the Indian Mutiny to the Mau Mau uprising. He describes decolonisation in non-British dependencies as "oceans of bloodshed", a fair description of India's fate.

In passing, Heffer praises Singapore's Westminster totalitarianism, revives the Domino Theory, and whitewashes the United States' throttling of Filipino independence as "setting a path towards liberation and nationalism". Such views are not surprising for an apologist for the "empire on which the sun never rises" (in Orwell's words).

Niall Clugston,
Springwood, NSW, Australia

WHILE I do not want to pour cold water on the celebrations marking the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's sailing from Bristol for America (Ship's crew sails into a colonial past, May 18), it is incorrect to describe Newfoundland as England's first colony. Wales and France were earlier English colonies.

Frank Nowikowski,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

JOHN EZARD'S claim that Newfoundland only regained independence in 1949 would be disputed by most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Upon entry in 1949 to the then Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador gained independence from colonial Britain but exchanged it for dependence on the Candian Union.

Scott Coffen-Smout,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Good riddance to a tyrant

I WAS very pleased to hear that Mobutuism has been banished from Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). But that is not enough. Mobutu must be prosecuted for the violations of his people rights. He must apologise to all his people before he dies. There should be an end to corruption and the violation of people rights in Africa.

Manotar Tampubolon,
University of Wollongong, Australia

IT'S worth re-emphasising that the Mobutus, Mois and Mugabes of Africa are products of powerful international forces, structures and institutions which find it to their advantage to support and nourish individuals of dubious character to the detriment of the people of Africa.

The good thing is that this attitude is changing and there appears to be a greater tendency toward a fairer, or at least more realistic, relationship in international politics and economics. Maybe things will change for the better. Then we will stop seeing Ethiopians, Somalis and Rwandans on our televisions, and Africans will stop going to the West as economic and political refugees, and start going as tourists and skilled workers.

Femi Adeyemi,
London

Won't vote, can't change

NICOLAS WALTER says that the abstentionists are the "second political grouping in the country" following the election in Britain (May 18). He goes on to say that a No vote means "Don't agree" and "Want something different".

This is a dangerous and irresponsible view. In a democracy the electorate appoints and dismisses governments. If citizens do not exercise their right to vote, then an unrepresentative government gains power, and No-voters only have themselves to blame if they do not like it. The alternative to democratic rejection of a government is violent revolution, hardly desirable in any democratic country. If a dissatisfied section of society cannot find a party that represents them, then they have the democratic right to establish one, and fight an election.

On a less grand level, they may put a single candidate up for election, thereby gaining one voice in Parliament. If this sounds farfetched, look what Martin Bell achieved, a man with barely any private means, and who accepted individual donations of no more than £100 towards his campaign. The tide of dissatisfaction against the status quo in that constituency was strong enough to produce the necessary support.

P Q Blackburn,
Poznan, Poland

Women's wants and needs

SHEILA Rowbotham's excellent piece on the women's movements of the late nineties (Real feminists tackle the world's real problems, May 18) hits the nail on the head. The feminist movement of the sixties has served its purpose — conscientising women about their rights and needs. But now that it has moved into the next stage of organising women on specific issues and encouraging them to actually work for their rights, its inherently amorphous character is clear.

The needs and wants of women are so diverse, depending on their backgrounds and socio-economic status, that it is impossible to unite them on the same platform. Hence the proliferation of smaller groups with specific aims and objectives.

This disparity is more marked in Third World countries, where class divisions are more marked. The educated and affluent upper-class woman is not disadvantaged and deprived in the same way as an illiterate woman with no access to education and health care, who, if she is in paid employment, is exploited as well. It is therefore understandable that women's groups are more focused.

Zubeida Mustafa,
Karachi, Pakistan

Briefly

YOUR April 20 edition contained the headline "Israelis shoot 31 Palestinians". It takes little imagination to know what the international — particularly the United States — reaction would have been to a similar story with the headline "British troops shoot 31 in Northern Ireland". Why does the international community persistently refuse to judge Israeli behaviour by the same standards applied to other democratic societies? Is it really fear of "the Jewish lobby" and its influence over US policy, or is there actually an unarticulated message here that Palestinian lives are inherently less valuable than the lives of demonstrators in, say, Belfast or Londonderry?

S Holloway,
Dubai, UAE

ALL the fuss about Kasparov and Deep Blue is built on false premises (May 12). Chess was designed to be played by two examples of a multi-purpose organic being, potentially equal in capacity. The contest in which a highly resourced, single-purpose machine is matched against one of the more skilful of these beings is as purposeless as pitting Linford Christie against a robot in a 100m race. Deep Blue did not win, because machines cannot win or lose; they just do what they are designed to do more or less well.

Peter Shield,
Woodthorpe, Nottingham

WHEN Richard Thomas wrote (May 18), "There is, though, a possibility . . . [that] these are people who simply do not have the resources to climb . . . out of poverty". I presume he was being ironic. There have always been, and these always will be, some who are lucky in the genetic lottery, and others who are less lucky. One of the central questions of ethics is: do the lucky ones help the less lucky, or do they exploit them?

Dr Paul Mestitz,
Geelong, Victoria, Australia

MAY I publicly thank the Home Secretary (Straw lets Nepalese man stay, May 18) for allowing me — and, no doubt, many other Britons at home and abroad — to feel once again that we are citizens of a civilised nation.

Geoffrey Allen,
Pavia, Italy

DID Ann Widdecombe's remark about her former boss having "something of the knight about him" merely mean that he was to follow the well-trodden path of failed Tory ministers and become "Sir Michael"? I think we should be told.

Beverley Collins,
University of Leiden,
The Netherlands

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Taliban win end-game as last city falls

Phil Goodwin in Mazar-i-Sharif

AFTER almost 20 years of civil war, Afghanistan is on the verge of peace following a the fall of the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

The end-game was staged around the northern city, the only one which had eluded the control of the Taliban Islamic militia since they started to capture parts of the country at the end of 1994.

Troops loyal to the Taliban captured Mazar-i-Sharif last Saturday after the leader of the anti-Taliban alliance, General Abdul Rashid Dostam, had been betrayed by two of his commanders who blame him for killing their brother. They switched sides to the Taliban.

Gen Dostam controlled the north for years, in effect establishing a fiefdom with his own foreign affairs ministry and keeping the region out of the factional fighting further south.

The first indication of the end came early last Saturday at Gen Dostam's military headquarters in the town of Shibargan, 130km west of Mazar-i-Sharif. The mood of swagger and defiance among the troops vanished as casualties started to come in to the military hospitals.

The rebel troops soon roared into Mazar-i-Sharif in Jeeps and tanks. The Dostam troops they encountered gave up their weapons without a fight. Gen Dostam had already fled.

Ironically for the Taliban, the final push was made by their former enemies. The Taliban are now moving into Mazar-i-Sharif in large numbers. There are still small pockets of resistance in the centre of the country from some disparate factions, but there are signs that their will to fight is waning.

The streets of Mazar-i-Sharif have been deserted. Men have begun to forgo Western clothes for turbans and long shirts to try to fit into the Taliban's vision of how people should carry themselves.

Tough restrictions were immediately imposed on women. The Taliban banned women's education, as they have done elsewhere in the country, despite a promise to free women to go to school if the security situation improves.

The new authorities also banned women from working in government offices, saying they will be paid to stay at home. In addition, they told women to cover themselves from head to foot if they step outdoors.

The Taliban leader chosen to control the city, the former governor of Herat, Mullah Abdur Razzaq, went to the central mosque to announce fundamental changes to what had been a liberal Islamic culture.

He told the mosque packed with soldiers that peace was close and listed new measures in line with the Taliban's vision of an Islamic state and their interpretation of *sharia* law. Murderers would be hanged or shot. Thieves would have a hand and a foot cut off. He ended by announcing the restrictions on women.

Mazar-i-Sharif had been famous for its openness in educating both sexes. A young woman who has just graduated from the city's renowned medical school has been trying on a *burqa* — the body-length garment which the Taliban say women must wear outdoors — for the first time.

The student, speaking from behind it, was almost in tears. She said she supported the Taliban and peace, but did not understand the restrictions. "My understanding of the Koran is that men and women are equal," she said. "I want to serve the country like my male colleagues and help Afghanistan, The Taliban only want me to stay at home."

Most Afghans do not understand why many countries have refused to fund aid projects because of the Taliban restrictions on women. Most women here live in a conservative environment that has changed little in centuries, and the majority of people believe the loss of freedom for a few is a small price to pay for the prospect of nationwide peace and a chance to rebuild the country.

Yeltsin sacks defence chief

David Hearst in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin last week sacked his defence minister, General Igor Rodionov, and his deputy, in a sudden purge of the military top brass designed to reinforce his control over an underpaid, disaffected and near-mutinous army.

In a television broadcast, Mr Yeltsin turned on Gen Rodionov, aged 60, a career general with a reputation for honesty and plain speaking, blaming him for the stalled military reform.

He accused him of presiding over an army whose generals built themselves large dachas while their soldiers had nothing to eat. "Soldiers grow thinner and generals get fatter," Mr Yeltsin said. "Generals have built dachas all over Russia. I wonder where this fashion came from? Generals are not interested in reorganising the army because they may lose their privileges. They are the main obstacle to implementing army reforms."

Shortly after the outburst, Gen Rodionov and Viktor Samsonov, the chief of general staff, were dismissed. General Igor Sergeyev, the commander of the strategic rocket forces, was named as defence minister, and Colonel-General Viktor Chechevatov, the head of the Far East military district, was tipped to become the new chief of staff.

Gen Chechevatov first came to Mr Yeltsin's attention when he stood as a candidate in last year's presidential election and then withdrew in favour of the president.

He recently had to defend himself from newspaper revelations that he had built an enormous dacha outside Moscow, rumoured to cost more than $500,000. He said he borrowed the money from a bank. But loyalty to Mr Yeltsin was more important than the fine detail of the general's private finances.

● The leaders of Russia and Belarus signed a union charter, creating a supreme council to be chaired in turn by Mr Yeltsin, and Belarus's President Alexander Lukashenko. It will co-ordinate social, economic and military policies, and both leaders will have a veto.

Necmettin Erbakan accompanied by generals in Ankara last week. He was forced to approve a twice-yearly purge of officers deemed to have Islamist tendencies. *Le Monde, page 13* PHOTOGRAPH: FAITH SARIBAS

Rivals jostle for power in Kinshasa

Chris McGreal in Kinshasa

BITTER wrangling between the victorious rebel leadership in Congo and Mobutu Sese Seko's political opponents about who are the legitimate heirs to take power after the fall of the dictator are threatening to destabilise the new government in former Zaire.

As Laurent Kabila confronts the stark realities of Kinshasa's disreputable politics, he has also to hold together his own movement now that the common cause of bringing down Mobutu has been realised.

After days of wrangling, the victorious rebels handed out posts in the new government last week but did not include the country's most prominent and controversial opposition politician, the former prime minister Etienne Tshisekedi.

Mr Tshisekedi denounced President Kabila's government as a dictatorship and called for popular resistance after his demand to become prime minister of the rechristened Congo was refused. "Not only do I not recognise this government, for me this government does not exist, and I call on the people to ignore it and resist to their last energy a government which doesn't have popular legitimacy," he said.

Several hundred demonstrators marched through Kinshasa to protest against Mr Kabila's decision to scrap the post of prime minister and move to a presidential system.

On Monday, the government banned all public demonstrations in the capital until further notice, citing a need to maintain security.

Mr Tshisekedi's aides accused the new order of rejecting international appeals for a broadly based administration. But Mr Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces said it was excluding Mr Tshisekedi because he demanded to be reinstated as prime minister and appoint his own cabinet. He also wanted the presidency to be reduced to a secondary role.

"There will be no prime minister. It is a presidential regime," said an Alliance spokesman, Gaetan Kakudji. "Let's not forget who got rid of Mobutu. We did, and nobody else."

Of 13 cabinet members appointed, five are from outside the Alliance and two come from Mr Tshisekedi's party.

Foreign diplomats generally welcomed the new government, saying that the Alliance had made a genuine effort to be inclusive and that Mr Tshisekedi had been making unreasonable demands.

Mr Tshisekedi has kept a door open to Mr Kabila, however, calling him a brother and saying he hoped they could meet.

● Mr Kabila's rebels massacred more than 200 unarmed Rwandan Hutu refugees at a port on the Congo river last month and 140 at a village to the south, witnesses said. Priests, civil servants and residents said the alliance killed more than 200 refugees at Mbandaka.

Le Monde, page 13

The Week

EIGHT years after leading eastern Europe's anti-communist revolutions, Poles narrowly voted in a referendum to adopt a democratic constitution to replace the communist-era charter.

AT LEAST 142 people died in a shopping centre fire and riot in East Kalimantan city on the island of Borneo, in Indonesia's violence-plagued election campaign. The country's independent election watchdog said this week's poll was expected to be neither free nor fair.

GENILDO Ferreira, a former soldier, ran amok with two guns and a grenade, killing at least 17 people before dying in a shootout with police in São Goncalo do Amarante, north-eastern Brazil.

LIEUTENANT Kelly Flinn, the first woman B-52 pilot, is to appeal against the order under which she was allowed to resign from the US air force to avoid being courtmartialled for adultery and insubordination.
Washington Post, page 16

NATO leaders and Russia's President Yeltsin have signed a treaty forging a closer relationship between the former cold war opponents.
Martin Walker, page 6

BURMA'S military government began arresting supporters of the democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to break up another attempted congress of her political party, one of her aides said.

TURKEY turned down requests from Britain for the arrest of fugitive tycoon Asil Nadir who paid a visit to Istanbul. The Northern Cyprus businessman is wanted on theft and false accounting charges in London.

Confusion over Congo

ZAIRE'S new rulers have renamed their country the Democratic Republic of the Congo, creating two neighbouring nations — each with Congo in its name: The former Zaire, with its capital at Kinshasa, and the Republic of Congo, across the river from the former Zaire. Its capital is Brazzaville.

Zaire is the former Belgian Congo, ruled by Belgium until 1960. It became the Republic of Congo at independence in 1960, was called the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1964 and was renamed Zaire by Mobutu Sese Seko in 1971.

Zaire, with 46 million people, dwarfs the Congo Republic, with 2 million people.

Meanwhile United Nations officials must juggle the seats in New York and search the cupboards for old flags.

Military stages Sierra Leone coup

Claudia McElroy in Freetown

SOLDIERS in the West African state of Sierra Leone ousted the civilian government last weekend, forcing President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to fly into exile in Guinea.

Eyewitnesses said that Sierra Leonean soldiers exchanged sustained fire with Nigerian troops guarding the presidential complex in the capital, Freetown. Earlier, coup leaders had warned Nigerian troops not to intervene.

Nigerian and Guinean troops have been backing the army in Sierra Leone's war against rebels. Nigerian troops guard the state house, the capital's international airport and other key sites.

There was no word on casualties. Hospital sources said that five civilians died elsewhere in the capital and that several civilians and soldiers were wounded. The coup leaders announced a dusk-to-dawn curfew.

The soldiers involved in the coup — all enlisted men rather than officers — want the return from exile of Captain Solomon Musa, a former deputy military leader linked to coup allegations in 1993, and of General Julius Maada Bio, who led a coup last year before handing over to Mr Kabbah after elections.

On Monday cars arrived carrying former government ministers and senior military and police officers. They have been required to "report" to the new authorities of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. The precise fate of members of the old administration remains unclear, but on Monday five former ministers were detained in the military headquarters.

While Freetown woke once again to the sound of automatic gunfire and mortar shells on Monday, the country's new head of state, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, was desperately trying to restore some semblance of normality. Speaking on state radio he justified the military takeover on the grounds of President Kabbah's government's "failure to consolidate the gains reported to have been achieved by the brokers of peace in our motherland".

Civilians remain shocked and nervous after the violent orgy of looting that swept Freetown last Sunday. Soldiers and civilians, becoming increasingly intoxicated and aggressive as the day wore on, shot their way into homes and offices, ransacking the contents and stealing cars.

Little is known about the new leadership. "I do not know Major Koroma, but this is an element of the army that has taken over and I can only appeal to them to return Sierra Leone to constitutionality and the rule of law as opposed to the rule of the jungle," said Desmond Luke, a Freetown lawyer and former member of the peace commission.

The "revolutionaries" are believed to have strong links with the former military regime that was forced to hand over to the civilian government only last year following the country's first democratic elections in almost 30 years.

Maj Koromo's spokesman, Captain Paul Thomas, is said to have been assistant to the former strongman, Lieut-Col Tom Nyuma, who is now studying in the United States. Several other officers in the former military regime who were offered courses overseas are also reported to be planning their comeback, although it is unclear whether the former head of state, Captain Valentine Strasser — enrolled at Warwick university — intends to return.

This latest military coup is Sierra Leone's third in five years. It is the culmination of growing discontent within the army, which faced being halved in size and having access to resources restricted.

But the people of Sierra Leone, who voted overwhelmingly to get rid of the last military regime, are obviously wary of yet another army dictatorship. "This country has had a long succession of so-called redeemers who claim they will rescue Sierra Leone from the abyss it's in, but they've invariably turned out to be as corrupt, selfish or incompetent as the one before," said one local journalist.



Australia's prime minister, John Howard, left, apologised at a conference on reconciliation on Monday to the thousands of Aborigines taken from their parents under a past policy of forced assimilation. Hundreds of delegates turned their backs on Mr Howard as his speech continued PHOTO: SIMON O'DWYER

Bir Zeit students defy Hamas and Arafat

Graham Usher in Ramallah

THE deadlock in the Oslo peace process has been accompanied by a big fall in popularity for Yasser Arafat and Fatah, the mainstream faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Ever since the Israeli government decided to build the Har Homa Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank, polls have shown a steady decline in Palestinian support for negotiations with Israel and a rise in support for armed attacks against Israeli targets.

It is a reversal that has benefited Palestinian opponents of the Oslo process, most notably the Islamist Hamas movement. In the past two months, elections in what were formerly Fatah strongholds in the West Bank and Gaza have returned Islamist majorities. In Hebron a Hamas-led list defeated a Fatah list by 19 seats to 15 in student elections at the university in April.

But student council elections at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank bucked the trend. With its strong secular and nationalist traditions, Bir Zeit has long been seen as a barometer of Palestinian political opinion. During the Israeli occupation, Bir Zeit earned a reputation for academic excellence and nationalist militancy, producing from its ranks some of the ablest and most articulate leaders of the Palestinian cause.

Last year, Bir Zeit students marched against Mr Arafat's Palestinian Authority in protest at the arrest of student leaders by the Palestinian police and infiltration of the campus by agents of the authority's myriad intelligence services. With a Likud government in Israel and the virtual collapse of the Oslo process, it was expected that this year Hamas would win the student council elections by a landslide.

It did not happen. In a closely governed poll on April 9, in which authority officials were not allowed anywhere near the count, a Fatah-led list defeated a Hamas list by 22 seats to 20. The result has left the pundits scratching their heads.

It appears to have less to do with a decline in admiration for Hamas than in political changes that have occurred in Fatah. "We decided this year to distance ourselves from the authority," said a Fatah student leader at Bir Zeit, Ibrahim Krieshah. "At our election meetings, there were no posters of Yasser Arafat. Nor did we hold back in our criticisms of the authority's human rights abuses and its disrespect of the political independence of Palestinian universities."

Other commentators see Fatah's victory as evidence of the subtle changes Oslo has wrought in the content of Palestinian nationalism. "In the elections, interest in women's issues was not confined to feminist organisations, but was of concern to all politically aware students," said a sociology lecturer at Bir Zeit, Islah Jad.

Fatah students exploited this awareness fully in their electoral tussle with Hamas, arguing that while the Islamists advocated "pluralism" in politics, this did not extend to social or gender issues.

At a time of general cynicism about the peace process and politics, Bir Zeit's commitment to democracy and diversity is salutary. "At Bir Zeit, we don't outlaw the opposition," said Bir Zeit's public relations officer, Albert Aghazarian. "We incorporate it. It is a model we hope to extend to Palestinian society as a whole."

Havel attacks Klaus as Czech crisis deepens

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE Czech president, Vaclav Havel, last weekend launched a blistering attack on the government of Vaclav Klaus, coming close to demanding the prime minister's resignation after three cabinet ministers quit at the weekend.

Mr Havel's intervention in the mounting crisis in Prague confronted Mr Klaus with his biggest challenge since he led the negotiations to break up Czechoslovakia in 1992.

Three key cabinet members — the finance, interior and trade ministers — resigned last weekend, taking the blame for a worsening economic crisis as part of a government reshuffle, which represents Mr Klaus's survival strategy.

But Mr Havel, a popular figure, rubbed salt into Mr Klaus's wounds by dismissing the resignations as inadequate and suggesting the entire government's departure could be "the cleanest solution constitutionally" to the country's problems.

The opposition leader, Milos Zeman, who has overtaken Mr Klaus in recent opinion polls, called for fresh elections next year — two years early.

Mr Havel used his regular weekly radio address to scorn the cabinet reshuffle as "cosmetic personnel changes" which he doubted would restore faith in the government.

The president has the power to block or endorse the appointment of cabinet ministers, and Mr Havel appeared to be warning that he could complicate the prime minister's scheme for remaining in power. Mr Havel said he would not agree to "half-way solutions".

Since becoming Czech prime minister in 1992, Mr Klaus has established himself as the most successful government leader in post-communist Europe, overseeing the shift to a free market while maintaining minimal unemployment, a balanced budget and low inflation. Exactly a year ago he became the first post-communist leader to win a second term.

His majority, however, was very slim, and Mr Zeman's revitalised Social Democrats were seen as the real victors. Since then, the shine has rubbed off Mr Klaus's "economic miracle" because of a string of bank collapses, widespread fraud and corruption, and a ballooning balance of payments crisis.

In recent days, the central bank has spent more than $1.6 billion shoring up the Czech crown against a speculators' onslaught, and Mr Klaus may be forced into a humiliating devaluation.

Italy targets separatism

John Hooper in Rome

A PLAN to turn Italy into the most decentralised country in Europe was put before parliament last week in a bid to stem separatism. The blueprint for a new federal republic would devolve immense powers to Italy's regions, and give them the right to raise their own taxes and decide how they should be governed. It would also give much more influence to local councils.

The project was presented to a commission formed from both houses of parliament created to reform the constitution following the virtual collapse in the early 1990s of the old order. Paradoxically for such a radical plan, it is the work of an all-party committee of MPs headed by a rightwing opposition deputy, Francesco D'Onofrio — a Christian Democrat who was once Silvio Berlusconi's education minister.

Until now, the debate over decentralisation has been all but monopolised by the Northern League leader, Umberto Bossi, and his ill-defined vision of an independent or autonomous "Padania" stretching across northern Italy from France to Slovenia. Mr D'Onofrio's proposal for an Italy split into 20 powerful regions means there is now an authoritative alternative. But the plan was given a heated reception by opposition legislators.

From the other end of the political spectrum, Fausto Bertinotti, whose Communist Refoundation party holds the balance of power in the lower house, said he was "absolutely opposed to the idea of turning Italy into a sort of patchwork".

The principal problem posed by Mr D'Onofrio's blueprint is that it risks raising expectations that the government will be unable to satisfy.

But there are worrying signs that unless Rome can find a way of meeting at least some of the demands in the regions, especially the north, there will be trouble.

Russia detects big Korean heroin flow

Lucy Jones in Vladivostok

A SHARP increase in the number of North Korean contract workers found possessing heroin in Russia's far east has prompted fears among officials that cash-strapped North Korea has started exporting drugs as government policy.

Over the past year, the train from the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, to Moscow has been turned back more than five times because Russian border guards have found large amounts of raw opium stashed behind seats.

Spot checks on North Korean workers in the countryside of Russia's far east have led to the seizure of high-quality heroin packaged for sale. On one farm, near Vladivostok, land had been set aside for the production and drying of poppy seeds.

In another case, two North Koreans were caught trying to sell 8kg of heroin, and maintained that a further two tonnes were waiting across the border.

"These men were working for the North Korean secret service," alleged Andrei Tregerov, an official in the "war on drugs" department in Vladivostok. "They were educated and spoke fluent Russian. One man's father had been a military attaché in Moscow. Usually, it's the more senior North Korean workers, the foremen, who are involved rather than ordinary workers."

The type of payment demanded for the heroin has also fuelled speculation that the North Korean government might be involved. North Korean heroin dealers have asked for photographic paper, pumps, electrical goods and benzine.

While heroin is a problem in Russia's far east, addiction to medical preparations based on ephedrine as well as on morphine and codeine, both derived from opium, is endemic. Known as "women's heroin", they are sold in tablets and injected by users. Tablets are cheap (costing about $1.20 each) and readily available.

In the port of Nakhodka, east of Vladivostok, North Korean labourers are building a sports stadium. "When the North Koreans arrived, a drug problem arrived too," said Ludmilla Ivanovnaya, of the region's residents' committee. "The North Koreans sell it to the Korean Russians, who sell it here."

Police believe "women's heroin" is smuggled into Russia by North Korean doctors, who are allowed to visit groups of North Korean workers. Ethnic Korean Russians (descendants of Koreans who ended up in the Russian far east after the second world war) are then thought to act as intermediaries.

Prosecuting drug importers is proving difficult. A defunct Soviet agreement with Pyongyang allowing erring North Koreans to be sent home rather than being tried tends to be applied.

Anti-drug campaigners and police say they are up against the regional government and local construction companies, which welcome the North Koreans as a cheap task force. More than 4,500 North Koreans work legally in Primorsky region on building sites and farms, although the actual number is three times as high, according to immigration officials.

Olga Yushakova, from Vladivostok's drug rehabilitation centre, said: "High unemployment rates and cheap drugs are a fatal combination. We need stricter border controls to push up the price of the drugs. We would then see fewer people trying them in the first place."

'Massive' child abuse in Belgium

Stephen Bates in Brussels

ONE in five children in Belgium may be victims of some sort of abuse, suggests a report published last weekend by a national advisory committee set up to examine the sexual exploitation of children.

The report outlines 25 proposals for the treatment of child victims and their abusers and suggests that the protection of minors should be written into the constitution. It also calls for treatment as well as punishment of offenders and sex education in schools from the age of 11.

Child abuse victims presented King Albert II of Belgium and the prime minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, with a stark picture of their plight at a conference in Brussels last weekend.

One teenage boy spoke of his hatred for teachers who had abused him for two years, and five mothers whose children have disappeared pleaded for help from the government. The boy, his voice shaking with emotion, told an audience of several hundred: "I did not say anything because I was afraid. I lost confidence in everyone. There is no pain so terrible and no penalty strong enough to punish the crime of paedophilia. For once, ministers, you should hit hard."

The conference, called to highlight the exploitation and abuse of children, has come in the wake of a series of abduction and murder cases and the arrest of at least two serial paedophiles and their associates, which has shaken Belgium to the core.

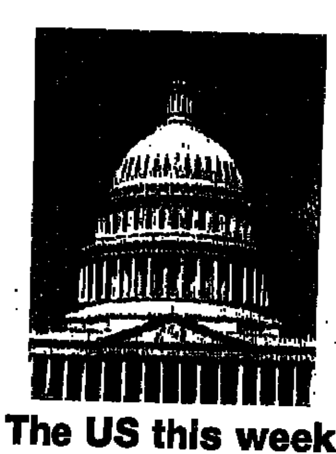
Public emotion has been raw since police arrested Marc Dutroux, aged 39, a builder from Charleroi, last August. They rescued two teenage girls from a cell in his basement and found the bodies of four other girls buried in his garden.

In March the body of a nine-year-old girl who disappeared five years ago was found in a trunk in the cellar of Patrick Derochette, a petrol station owner from Brussels. Like Dutroux he was a convicted sex abuser.

Revelations of systematic incompetence in the police and judicial investigations have led the king to call for reforms and placed the government under heavy pressure to act. Reforms have yet to be made.

Mr Dehaene told the conference that "all means necessary" would be used to tackle child abuse and give greater consideration within the judicial system to victims.

Clinton maps out vision for Europe



The US this week

Martin Walker

THE FUTURE of Anglo-American relations, and perhaps even the fate of Europe, hinge this week on whether Tony Blair can convince Bill Clinton at their meeting in Downing Street that Britain will be part of Clinton's solution, rather than part of his problem. So far, the president can best be described as hopeful and expectant.

"I think this relationship will be very good," Clinton told me on Friday last week, in the course of an hour-long interview in the Oval Office. "Based on the conversations I've had with him [Blair] and the fast start he has made, we have a chance to have a very good partnership, and I'm excited about it."

One has only to talk to the president to realise just how much of himself he is putting into the grand mission to forge a new transatlantic alliance with "an undivided and democratic Europe", which will include Russia and will transform the old politics of the balance of power.

"It is a fundamental departure from the way geo-politics have been practised by nation states," Clinton said. "We are trying to write a future for Europe that will be different from its past."

He knows that much of this will be sneered at as "globaloney" by his isolationist critics and by his opponents in Congress. He knows also that he is risking ridicule in some of the American media and in much of Britain's Eurosceptic press. But on the eve of his departure for Europe, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Aid plan and to sign the new partnership agreement with Russia, Clinton spelled out a grandiose and hugely optimistic vision of a Europe and a transatlantic relationship designed to establish him in history as a foreign policy president.

"What we have done is to create a balance of power that restrains and empowers all those that come within the framework of the agreement," he said. "We have the capacity to create a new reality, to define our greatness in ways that do not entail the necessity of dominating our neighbours.

"This is the moment to create a new structure that will carry us through the next 50 years, just as General Marshall and the Marshall plan generation created the structure that carried us through the cold war."

That structure, he hoped, would eventually include bringing the great powers of Asia — India and China — into the Group of Seven summit process, just as Russia is now to be included at this summer's G7 meeting in Denver. But the key to the process was to change the traditional rivalries and military threats of great power relations, beginning with the transformed relationship between the United States, Europe and Russia.

"What we are trying to do is to ensure that the dogs of the 21st century do not bark — and that is worth a hell of a lot. It will reduce the chances that Americans have to die in Europe in the 21st century, as they did in the 20th.

"We are much closer now to transforming Nato from a military alliance aimed at Russia into a transatlantic system that includes it. This is a huge step towards redefining the strategic realities of the 21st century. The great power politics of Europe in the 20th century have bedevilled the lives of ordinary people and destroyed states."

I asked if it was his policy to lock Russia into the West, into its security institutions, economic structures and family.

The president replied: "I hope so. But locking may not be the word. I'm not forcing them to do anything. But if I were the president of Russia, and looked at the potentials for future problems in Europe, or in central Asia and with China, I would very much want to be a part of the West's institutions.

"I believe Boris Yeltsin to be a true democrat, who believes in human rights, believes in elections. But he is also an old-fashioned Russian patriot and nationalist. This is not easy for the Russians, or for anybody, to reconcile their past with a partnership with nations they once dominated or once feared."

In that remark, there was a not-so-subtle hint to Britain. The point for the new British prime minister to understand is that he will play host at their meeting to a most engaging, persuasive and passionate pro-European. And since Clinton will converse in his native English, and with a genuine sense of pride in the political achievement of his adept British pupil in the modernising arts, it promises to be an extremely comfortable encounter.

Their staff have agreed five main talking points, and expect complete unanimity on Northern Ireland — where Clinton said he was "most encouraged" by Blair's latest pronouncements — and on Hong Kong, where Clinton wholly backs the Chinese-British agreement.

What Clinton really wants to probe are Blair's intentions on Europe, and within that framework, to talk about the next phase of Nato enlargement and what on earth they can do in Bosnia over the coming year to allow the US and British troops in the S-for team to withdraw on time.

Clinton's main thrust in his talks with Blair will be that he is very relaxed about European Monetary Union (EMU) and the euro, which matter less than the overall British attitude to the European project. He believes these economic matters will unfold at whatever pace Europeans feel comfortable with, that it will not challenge the primacy of the dollar as a reserve currency nor harm US interests, and he stands supportively by.

Trade rows over bananas or Boeing "will go on forever", Clinton said. "But if we have a framework that permits Europeans to work these questions out in their own good time and in their own way, I think economic realities will lead free people to good decisions."



The president made a rousing statement of support for "continued European integration and a strong European Union", and Britain's role within it, that could almost have been drafted in Brussels.

"I have always felt that there are ways to preserve national sovereignty, national identity and national interests, and still draw closer economically and still have closer political co-operation and strategic partnership. History is on our side in this," he said.

Helmut Kohl, the foreign leader whom Clinton respects most, has reinforced Clinton's Europhile instincts over the past four years. This all adds to the powerful institutional force of the US foreign policy bureaucracy, which has supported European integration since the days of the Marshall plan.

CLINTON is determined to take this matter of European integration to a new level, and this is where he will press Blair and the other European leaders hardest. Believing that his decision to enlarge Nato is the very core of his foreign policy ambition, Clinton wants that enlargement buttressed, and given economic reinforcement by a swift expansion of the EU to include the new Nato members.

"I would hope they would proceed in parallel. Keep in mind that the important thing to me about Nato enlargement, and the new agreement between Nato and Russia, is that it gives us a chance to create a framework of an undivided, democratic Europe. I think this has merit that is quite profound.

"Now, in order for the former communist countries to succeed in the long run, there will have to be more economic integration, and perhaps more political integration too. Those are decisions for the Europeans to make. But we have made it clear, as long as I have been here, that we have never felt threatened by European integration and indeed support it. So these things will have to proceed apace, even though they don't have to proceed in lock step."

It cannot be said too strongly that this vision for Europe is the heart of what Clinton sees as his place in history. He wants to be known in the 21st century as the man who completed the strategic mission that the US launched 50 years ago with the Marshall plan and Nato, the statesman who crafted the great peace after the cold war by bringing North America, Europe and Russia into an amicable partnership of prosperous democracies. For Blair to withstand this, or even for Blair to fail to be inspired by it, would be to tread on Clinton's dreams.

"I believe we have an opportunity and a responsibility just as great as that of the Marshall plan generation, and in some ways more difficult, in that we are not coming out the ashes of war, and no one can speak with the authority that victors in a war can do. But this is a moment to create a structure that will carry us for the next 50 years.

"Trying to create something as profound as this requires, I believe, a level of American leadership and engagement that basically runs against the historical grain in the United States, except for the past 50 years. But then we needed the searing experience of the Great Depression, the war and the stark reality of Stalin to coalesce the forces in our country that made it possible for us to create the world we did 50 years ago.

"Historically, the United States has been much more, if not isolationist, uninvolved. Now we see that, ironically, we have all this influence, all this military and economic power, that only amounts to something if we are willing to acknowledge our interdependence with others. My own biggest challenge is to create a political climate within this country to meet that challenge."

Martin Woollacott, page 12

Setback for Slovakia after poll boycott

Ian Traynor in Bonn

SLOVAKIA'S democratic image and its prospects of joining Nato suffered severe blows last weekend when a crucial twin referendum was officially declared void because of last-minute government manipulation of the ballot.

An overwhelming majority of Slovaks boycotted the vote in protest at a move by the populist prime minister, Vladimir Meciar, to delete a question from the ballot papers.

The Central Referendum Committee on Monday announced that there had been a 9.6 per cent turnout and said in its report to parliament that the ballot had not been carried out according to law. The low turnout meant the referendums, seen as a crucial test of Slovakia's commitment to democracy, were also invalid.

The latest manoeuvring by Mr Meciar, a controversial figure repeatedly criticised by Western governments, diplomats and human rights watchers, stunned the opposition and the media and outraged independent observers.

The twin referendum was intended to ask Slovaks if they wanted to join Nato and whether the head of state should be elected by national plebiscite rather than by parliament, as in the present system. The ballot paper had four questions — three on Nato and one on the presidency.

Mr Meciar opposed the presidential poll since it would jeopardise his chances of gaining presidential powers next year. Despite losing two appeals to the constitutional court, the Meciar government suddenly deleted the presidential question from ballot papers distributed for the referendums last week.

As Western diplomats spoke of a tragedy for democracy, President Michal Kovac and other senior figures boycotted the vote. The referendum commission said it would start legal proceedings against the government.

The opposition Democratic party charged Mr Meciar with ushering in "the twilight of democracy" in Slovakia.

Alone of the four post-communist states of central Europe, Slovakia has been isolated by the West because of its dubious record on human rights and democratic commitment under Mr Meciar.

At a Nato summit in July, the Western alliance is to invite Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join, snubbing the Slovaks.

They were expected to affirm their desire to join Nato in the referendum, but Mr Meciar ensured the issue would be clouded by inserting questions on whether Slovaks want Nato bases and nuclear weapons on their territory.

In April Slovakia signed agreements with Russia on military co-operation which, in their timing at least, sent negative signals to Nato.

Blair charms his way to EU treaty deal

John Palmer, and Michael White in Noordwijk

TONY BLAIR'S European charm offensive last week cleared the way for an agreement this month on a new Amsterdam treaty after a special European Union leaders' summit dominated by the Prime Minister's debut on the European stage.

In a goodwill gesture to the new British government, Jacques Santer, the European Commission president, said he would try to get EU agreement on a package of measures to tackle Britain's fishing crisis and the quota-hopping controversy.

After talks at the Dutch resort of Noordwijk, all 15 governments appeared poised to strike a compromise agreement over issues holding up the new treaty. But Mr Blair repeatedly stressed that he was not yet satisfied that Britain's views on defence and border controls had been fully taken into account.

He warned there was a "lot of hard bargaining ahead" before his government could agree to more integration, adding that some issues of national sovereignty were "absolutely sacrosanct" — the preservation of border controls and full authority over national defence and foreign policy.

"Everybody here wants an agreement and so do I. But it must be one in Britain's interest," Mr Blair said. Striking an equally emollient tone, the Dutch foreign minister, Hans van Mierlo, said that all the summiteers had been convinced of the sincerity of Mr Blair and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl also paid tribute to the "constructive spirit" shown by the British government.

Constitutional lawyers are working on a treaty text that will enshrine Britain and Ireland's right to run their own border controls, while giving both countries maximum freedom to join in with the rest of the EU in other internal justice and security policies. If adopted, this approach would be more a question of Britain having an "opt-in" to common EU policies rather than the negative "opt-out" on which John Major's strategy was based.

The rest of the EU now seems ready to bow reluctantly to British pressure that justice and home affairs remain primarily a matter for intergovernmental co-operation. But, in return, Labour seems ready to see the European Court, the Commission and the European Parliament play a limited role in these areas.

In another key concession President Chirac abandoned Franco-German plans for a complete and timetabled integration of the EU and the Western European Union (WEU) — the so-called European pillar of Nato. Britain has fiercely opposed this.

● The Prime Minister showed his willingness to learn from his predecessors by holding a surprise meeting with former premier Margaret Thatcher last week.

The private meeting took place at Downing Street, 12 hours before Mr Blair set out to meet the other European leaders in Holland. Baroness Thatcher was granted the rare privilege of talking to her sucessor without aides or civil servants in the room taking notes. They discussed Nato, Britain's special relationship with the US, the handling of summits and how to approach certain world leaders.

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Fish delay agreement

Richard Thomas

BRITAIN'S insistence on an opt-out to restrict foreign ownership of the home fishing fleet has put the brakes on an international deal to allow freer cross-border investment.

Finance ministers from the 29 member nations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were due to meet in Paris this week to thrash out remaining differences over a Multilateral Agreement on Investment, but hiccups mean a final settlement is not expected this year.

The British government has made a submission to the OECD requesting exemptions from the deal for three sectors of the economy: broadcasting, air and sea transport, and registration of fishing vessels, insisting that restrictions on boat ownership are required to "preserve fishing stocks".

The agreement would allow companies in one country to buy assets, stocks, property or land in other nations without penalties or restrictions. Initially, only the industrialised countries of the OECD will take part, but an eventual extension to poorer nations is expected

By contrast with the UK, the Spanish government has not requested special protection for its fishing fleet, and Spanish officials are furious over what they see as UK protectionism.

The United States is also pushing for a lengthy delay in ratification of the agreement because of the delicate politics of the Helms-Burton Act, which bans business people who do business in Cuba from stepping on to American soil.

During the meeting, a progress report will be issued promising a final draft before the next meeting in May 1998. Officials think action before the end of the year is unlikely.

Other countries seeking protection from overseas investors are France and Canada, which are anxious to stop Hollywood conglomerates from gobbling up their film industries.

But unions, environmental and Third World pressure groups welcome the delay, which will give them time to lobby for greater restrictions on transnational corporations.

The Week In Britain James Lewis

Managers lose in cash hunt for patient care

WITH the aim of finding an extra £100 million to spend on patient care this year, the new Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, declared war on management costs in the National Health Service and demanded an extra £34 million in savings, on top of the £46 million ordered by the last government.

The other £20 million is to be found by deferring for a year the applications of 1,000 family doctors to join the 60 per cent of GPs who are already "fundholders" and manage their own budgets to buy services for their patients. Labour is committed to scrapping the fundholding system but is keeping quiet, saying that the last thing the health service needs is further administrative upheaval.

If Mr Dobson manages to raise his £100 million — equal to one day's NHS spending — £10 million of it will go to improve breast cancer services and the rest on patient care generally. But more than 3,000 people could be made redundant if the management savings are to be found entirely from job cuts.

Peter Holm, of the Institute of Health Service Managers, accused the Health Secretary of trying to score political points by scapegoating his members. Pointing to the £750 million NHS deficit which Labour has inherited, Sandy Macara, chairman of the British Medical Association, claimed that the budget needed an injection of an extra £1 billion just to maintain the existing level of services.

YOUTH CRIME, reckoned by the new Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to be one of the most serious problems facing the country, is to be studied by a new task force that is charged with making recommendations which can be incorporated into a Crime and Disorder Bill before the end of the year.

Mr Straw told the Police Federation that a root and branch overhaul of the youth justice system was called for. The present system was slow, inconsistent, lax, and mimicked the behaviour of a bad parent — "indulgent one minute, overly harsh the next".

It presently takes an average of 18 weeks to process young offenders from arrest to sentence, but can take as long as a year. The Home Secretary plans a fast-track system to deal with persistent offenders. He also plans child protection orders to prevent youths from roaming the streets at night. And he will empower courts to force young offenders to apologise to their victims and do compensatory work for them.

THE largest study yet made of the controversial debilitating illness once known as ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis), and now called chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), suggested that it was responsible for half of all long-term sickness absence among schoolchildren.

The findings seemed certain to further heat the debate between sufferers (who believe they have fallen victim to a viral infection) and the medical establishment (which largely dismisses the condition as being of psychological origin).

The study was carried out in more than 1,000 schools over a five-year period from 1991 to 1995. It found that 42 per cent of staff and children away for more than two months were diagnosed as suffering from ME. The figure among children alone was 51 per cent.

The authors of the study were Jane Colby, a former head teacher recovering from ME, and a consultant microbiologist, Elizabeth Dowsett. They urged that young sufferers should be given support to allow them to learn at home. But three medical royal colleges — of physicians, psychiatrists and general practitioners — countered that children recovered more rapidly when encouraged to lead as normal a life as possible, with regular school attendance.

THE press baron, Lord Rothermere, sent shockwaves through his rightwing tabloid, the Daily Mail, when he said it would probably have to switch its editorial policy in favour of Labour to reflect the "new mood" of the country.

The super-rich Lord Rothermere had earlier announced his decision to abandon the crossbenches in the House of Lords in favour of Labour. He does not, however, spend much time in the Upper House since he lives abroad for most of the year for tax purposes.

He emphasised that the Daily Mail's political stance was a matter for its editor, Paul Dacre, but hinted darkly that if the paper failed to reflect the new mood, its readers might feel it was "out of date".

ANOTHER sign of the "new mood" was the decision of the once-shadowy security service, MI5, to place recruitment adverts in the Guardian and the Times. Well over 20,000 people — ten times the number of MI5's existing staff — applied to join in the first four days.

Many of the would-be spies who called the recruitment telephone hotline, however, were told that their details would be recorded by Colonel Botch and passed on to the KGB.

A computer hacker had managed to access the answering machine and replaced its message with one by "Colonel Botch" saying: "We have taken over MI5 because they are not secret any more and are a very crap organisation."

Austin





Flower power . . . John and Norma Major at the Chelsea Flower Show last week PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GILES

Major set to make the best of a non-job

HE MAY have looked relaxed with Norma at the Chelsea Flower Show, since he intends to become an even keener gardener in retirement on his two acres of Huntingdon than he was during snatched days off in office, *writes Michael White.*

But there is nobody so dead, politically speaking, as a dead politician. And John Major has made it plain since his seismic defeat on May 1 that he wants to return to the backbenches as soon as the Tory leadership contest produces a replacement.

"I'm going to be unique in my party, I'm going to be loyal to my successor," he is supposed to have told the shadow cabinet. In Norma Major he also has a wife who is glad to have him back. "He feels quite liberated," says one intimate.

Mr Major has performed twice at the Despatch Box against Tony Blair since the election, the terms of trade dramatically reversed between them by Labour's 179-seat majority. He knows well enough that the voters expect him to give the new cabinet a fair run for a while. Attack is the next man's problem.

So what does the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition do? Answer letters for one thing, 5,000 a day in the aftermath of defeat, more than 50,000 in all. He has the depleted shadow team to run, papers to read, people to see.

Evicted from their tied flat above the shop, the Majors are living in a friend's property in central London. They return to Huntingdon when they can.

This summer there is cricket and the Australian tour. Afterwards there is the football season. Cup winners Chelsea can no longer accuse him of being a jinx. But one thing is certain: after six years of having his every word analysed, Mr Major is giving no interviews — he thinks he has earned a rest.

Action to end abuse in care

David Ward and Sarah Boseley

THE Government is to change the law to prevent children being placed in the homes of convicted sex offenders after a foster father was jailed for indecent assaults on nine boys in his care.

Roger Saint, who over 18 years was allowed to foster 19 children by six social services departments, was jailed for 6½ years last week at Chester crown court. He had admitted 10 charges of indecent assault, Four other charges remain on file. Two incidents took place when he was a residential care worker.

It emerged that four social services departments, including Tower Hamlets and Clwyd, had allowed him to continue fostering children after they discovered he had a conviction from 1972 for sexually abusing a 12-year-old boy, when he was fined £15 by magistrates at Neath in south Wales. It should have been the end of his career with children.

Mr Justice Laws said: "The court is faced with an extremely gross case of the most serious abuse in relation to young children over a very considerable period of time."

The Health Minister, Paul Boateng, described the case as horrific and said it "beggared belief" that social workers had — and in Saint's case had used — discretionary powers to place children for fostering or adoption with convicted child abusers.

"We will be taking immediate steps to close this loophole," he added. "If you have got a past conviction for abusing children, you will not in future be allowed to foster or adopt a child."

Mr Boateng also undertook to legislate to ensure people with child abuse convictions were not permitted to work in children's homes.

Bob Lewis, president of the Association of Directors of Social Services, said: "Directors should not be waiting for a change in the law. It should be a very explicit condition in every local authority that any adult who abuses a child should not be allowed access either as a residential carer or a foster parent."

In court, Michael Farmer QC, prosecuting, described how Saint had abused boys aged from six to their mid-teens. "He took full advantage of opportunities for sexual gratification which his position afforded him," he said. "Not only his position but the vulnerability of the victims made it highly unlikely that they would make complaints."

Clwyd county council asked North Wales police to carry out the standard check on Saint when he first applied to foster children in 1978. This revealed nothing, but the council left him on its panel advising on fostering and adoption for nine years after his record came to light.

The conviction showed up in 1988 when Devon county council asked the Catholic Children's Society to run a check before entrusting children to Saint.

Saint was eventually arrested in March 1996, after two men formerly in his care went to the police.

Michael Murphy QC, defending, said Saint had used no intimidation. "He should not be regarded as a predator, someone who for his own motives was exploiting these people. There is another side to him — a caring side, a decent side."

Saint's abuse of boys will be considered by the long-running inquiry into abuse of children in homes in north Wales, which is in session in Ewloe, Flintshire.

● Controversial evidence to be revealed this week will assert that the majority of children in the Cleveland child abuse affair 10 years ago had in fact been sexually assaulted.

A Channel 4 documentary will offer independent evidence submitted to the Department of Health but until now undisclosed, that in 70 per cent of the cases the diagnoses of controversial paediatricians Marietta Higgs and Geoffrey Wyatt had been correct.

In the aftermath of the 1987 Cleveland abuse scandal, it was generally accepted that only a very few of the children had suffered.

"It is my belief that this evidence has been actively withheld and concealed. If the truth were known, I think Cleveland would be an even greater scandal than people imagine it to be," says Sue Richardson, who was child abuse consultant for Cleveland County Council in the late eighties.

Britain bans sale of land-mines

Ian Black and Richard Norton-Taylor

BRITAIN is to impose an immediate ban on the use of land-mines and destroy its stock of the weapons by 2005, the Government announced last week.

Seeking to maintain momentum by honouring Labour's manifesto pledge and seizing the high ground in foreign and defence policy, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said Britain would stop using or trading in all anti-personnel mines and "lead by force of example".

It would strive for an international ban on a weapon which killed or maimed thousands of innocent people every year — an issue highlighted by Diana, Princess of Wales recently on a Red Cross-sponsored visit to war-ravaged Angola.

Tony Blair told the Commons in his first question time as Prime Minister that "The sooner Britain gives a lead in this the better. It is the right and the civilised thing to do".

Mr Cook said: "Every hour another three people lose their life or lose a limb from stepping on a land-mine. Thousands of children who ran on to a land-mine are left unable to run ever again."

Tim Carstairs, spokesman for the UK Working Group on Land-mines, which incorporates 50 agencies including Oxfam and Christian Aid, said: "The speed at which the new Government has moved mirrors the urgency of the issue. It has been triggered by the public's overwhelming call for a ban."

Military chiefs had privately expressed concern about the decision to honour the manifesto commitment so quickly, although Ministry of Defence officials insisted they "were consulted and satisfied with the outcome".

Mr Cook said, however, that if "for a specific operation the security of our armed forces would be jeopardised without the possibility of the use of land-mines, then in exceptional circumstances any use would be reported by the Government to Parliament".

Announcing the ban, which includes "smart mines" which self-destruct after a set period, Mr Cook said Britain would sign up to the Ottawa Process, a Canadian initiative which groups 50 nations who want to sign a treaty by the end of this year to ban the production, stockpiling, export and use of mines.

British forces used mines in the Falklands and Gulf wars. Last week officials said ministers did not envisage the use of anti-personnel mines again but conceded it was a theoretical possibility.

The delay in destroying stocks — the MoD refused to say how many mines it held — until 2005 also represents a concession to the military. Officials said adequate alternative weapons would not be readily available earlier.

They acknowledged that alternatives, such as better surveillance techniques and more advanced conventional bombs, including mortars and shells, were being developed.

● Mr Cook last week gave the first public indication that controversial arms sales to Indonesia may be halted as a Whitehall-wide review began into export licence criteria.

Mr Cook said he would ask "searching questions" about the supply of water cannon to Indonesia in the light of new evidence that British equipment is being used to break up political demonstrations in Jakarta.

Aids woman speaks of fateful affair

Mike Kelly in Larnaca

A DYING Englishwoman who claims her former boyfriend knowingly infected her with the Aids virus last week gave evidence against him in a Cypriot courtroom.

Janette Pink, aged 45, looking pale and gaunt from the ravages of the disease, delivered her testimony in the hope that it will lead to the jailing of Pavlos Georgiou, a fisherman, aged 40.

She described how she met and fell in love with Georgiou in 1994 when she stayed at the family's holiday home in the Mediterranean island.

She had separated from her husband, a City accountant, and Georgiou, she said, told her his wife, Martha, was dying of leukaemia.

Early in their romance, she was told of a report in a Cypriot paper which said that Georgiou's wife had Aids and had passed it on to their newborn child.

When she confronted Georgiou, he denied the story. Mrs Pink then had an Aids test, which proved negative, so she decided to believe him.

But in the summer of 1994 Mrs Georgiou died and one of her children told Mrs Pink she had succumbed to Aids. A medical test a few weeks later revealed that Mrs Pink had become HIV positive.

She moved in with Georgiou and looked after him and his four children. In 1996 she became pregnant by him but had an abortion when tests revealed the unborn child was HIV positive. The relationship soured. Mrs Pink returned to Britain and was almost immediately admitted to hospital with pneumonia.

She left hospital two months later determined to take action against Georgiou. "As I got sicker, the knowledge of what Pavlos had done to me actually sank in and I thought something should be done about it."

Georgiou is accused that through negligence he committed an act that could possibly transmit the infection of a disease dangerous to life. If convicted, Georgiou faces a maximum two years in jail and a £2,000 fine.

Mrs Pink said she assumed it was safe to sleep with Georgiou without catching Aids as they had previously both been in long-standing relationships. "I didn't think [Aids] related to me. I thought it was related to homosexuals and drug users. I really didn't give it much thought."

The trial continues.

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In Brief

MYRA HINDLEY, the Moors murderer, has been given leave to challenge the decision of the former home secretary, Michael Howard, that she should never be freed from jail. It will be contested in the High Court.

ROISIN McALISKEY, the IRA suspect who was held in Holloway prison for most of her pregnancy, was freed on bail to allow her to give birth to a daughter in a London hospital.

THE new Labour MP for Worcester, Michael Foster, came top of the annual Commons ballot for Private Members' Bills, and immediately came under pressure to steer a new law banning fox hunting on to the statute books.

EUROTUNNEL was given conditional approval to resume freight shuttle services through the Channel tunnel by the British and French governments despite fears about the use of open-sided carriages.

A 22-YEAR-OLD deaf woman has won the right to state funding for a sign language interpreter to accompany her on outings in a House of Lords ruling that entitles disabled people to help in leading a full social life.

THE Trades Union Congress hailed the dawn of "social partnership Britain" in the wake of the first private Downing Street meeting between the Prime Minister and the leader of the TUC for well over a decade.

TWO IRA prisoners, Danny McNamee and Liam McCarter, both serving long sentences for terrorism in England, are to be transferred to Northern Ireland, in a clear sign that the Government is attempting to recreate the conditions of the 1994 ceasefire.

LABOUR is poised to proceed with its first privatisation initiative since the election by asking for bids from companies to run the Benefits Agency medical service, which examines 600,000 claimants a year.

THE Government is to rush to abolish the Tories' nursery voucher scheme at the end of the summer term, in the first stage of a programme to deliver a free school place for every four-year-old by September 1998.

SEVERAL hundred British soldiers shot for cowardice during the first world war could receive pardons following a review of their cases by the Government.

GUARDIAN cartoonist Steve Bell was the winner in two categories and runner-up in three others in Britain's first political cartoon competition, the Macallan.

Courts caught up in abortion row

Erlend Clouston

A SCOTTISH woman was prevented from going ahead with an abortion that four judges said she had a right to because her estranged husband appealed to take the case to the House of Lords to rule that the termination be declared illegal.

But on Tuesday, James Kelly, aged 28, a roofer from Fife, agreed to let Lynne Kelly, aged 21, proceed with the termination. He said he did not want to be the father of an unwanted child.

Last week he failed to persuade four Scottish judges that they should intervene to prevent his wife from ending her 14-week pregnancy.

On Monday morning an English solicitor delivered Mr Kelly's petition to the Lords, Britain's supreme civil court.

His case would have been considered only if it had raised new legal points. In two rulings over 10 days, Scottish judges accepted that Scottish law echoes English law in not guaranteeing protection to a foetus threatened by a termination carried out under the 1967 Abortion Act. But as the Court of Session had temporarily reimposed her husband's interim interdict prior to the Lords ruling, any attempt at procuring a termination could have seen Mrs Kelly charged with contempt of court.

Until Mr Kelly's decision on Tuesday, doctors who had co-operated with Mrs Kelly could also have found themselves charged with conducting an illegal operation.

The case was watched with particular interest by women's groups in Scotland, which has an historically more practical attitude to abortion.

Unlike England where doctors practising before 1967 were circumscribed by the Infant Life Preservation Act and the Offences against the Person Act, Scottish common law legalised terminations that preserved a woman's health. None the less, the 1967 act was welcomed by Scottish women previously inhibited from seeking abortions by the lack of health service facilities, and the cost — and stigma — of arranging private treatment.

Liz Armstrong, spokeswoman for the Scottish Abortion Campaign, said the campaign would have been appalled if the law ultimately had found in Mr Kelly's favour.

"That would not just be grossly insulting to women looking forward to the new millennium," she said. "It would be damaging to women's rights and women's health."

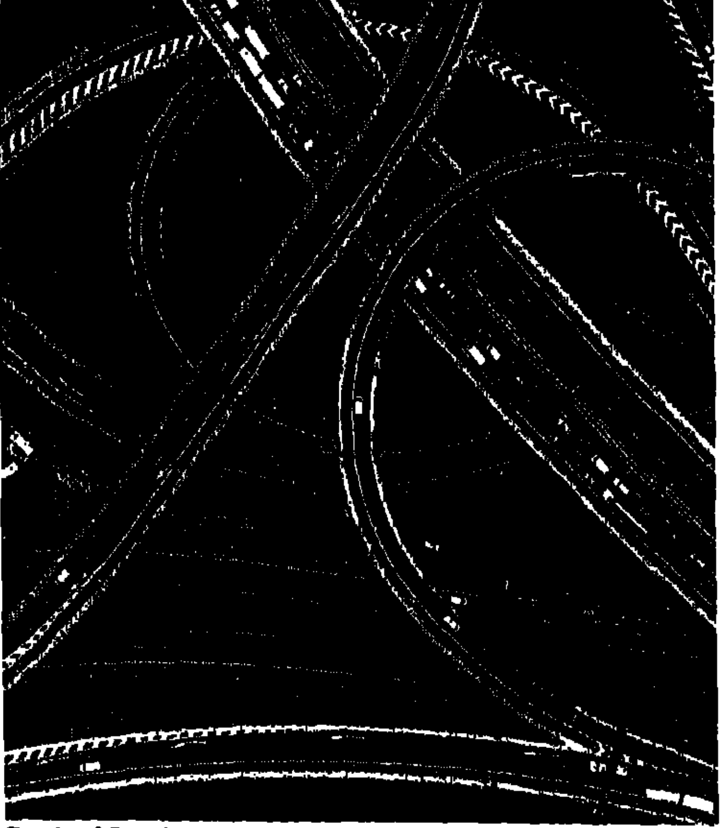
Carol Kearney, of the National Abortion Campaign, said last week: "If Mr Kelly wants a child he should seek to do this with somebody else and not impose a forced pregnancy on Mrs Kelly.

This is clearly a breach of her right to self-determination, autonomy and control over her own body and life."

But the Archbishop of Glasgow, Cardinal Thomas Winning, the head of Scotland's Catholic Church, criticising an earlier ruling in the Court of Session against Mr Kelly, said: "There is surely an extraordinary anomaly in the law when the father can be pursued by the Child Support Agency for maintenance of a child, but has no say in protecting the child's life in the womb," he said.

Mr and Mrs Kelly, who married in an Edinburgh register office in 1995 shortly before the birth of a daughter, Hazel, each claim to have been attacked by their partner. Mrs Kelly separated from her husband in April. She was due to have an abortion at Edinburgh's Royal infirmary on May 16, but Mr Kelly obtained an interdict the day before.

In a newspaper interview before the ban was lifted, Mrs Kelly said she had contemplated suicide and that she had been made to feel like a killer. "All I was wanting to do was what hundreds of women get done every week."

Spaghetti Junction, Birmingham, Europe's biggest motorway junction, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. It was thought so complex when it opened in 1972 that public meetings were held on how to use it

Accused MP vows to stay despite pressure to quit

MOHAMMED Sarwar will fight on as an independent MP even if Labour expels him, the party was warned on Monday as a spate of claim and counter-claims continued to test Tony Blair's patience with the Govan constituency, *writes Erlend Clouston*.

Speculation that Labour would withdraw the whip from Britain's first Muslim MP intensified following publication of taped conversations which appeared to suggest that Mr Sarwar offered to pay a third party to provide perjured evidence against political opponents.

In a bizarre twist to an increasingly byzantine story, however, Mr Sarwar's legal team promptly hit back last Sunday with a sworn affidavit from an alleged witness denying making any of the damning statements attributed to him in the News of the World.

As a propaganda war started over the circumstances in which Mr Sarwar handed over £5,000 to Badar Islam in a Glasgow hotel car park, a member of the MP's campaign team predicted he would not step down. "He will stay on as an independent MP at least until the court case which he tells us will exonerate him," the source said.

The cash-and-carry millionaire's hopes of political survival dipped, then rose again at the weekend as the man presented as one of Mr Sarwar's main accusers resurfaced as a staunch ally.

The News of the World presented more alleged details of the meeting between Mr Sarwar and Mr Islam — the Independent Labour candidate in the Govan contest.

The £5,000 transaction was allegedly witnessed by Mr Islam's election agent, Tariq Malik, who is quoted as saying: "The moment I saw the money, I knew it was corrupt and illegal."

However, Chris Kelly, Mr Sarwar's solicitor, produced a signed statement from Mr Malik rejecting all his published quotes.

Sources close to Mr Sarwar have always insisted that the £5,000 was a loan to Mr Islam. Mr Sarwar and/or his campaign team are facing three separate investigations by the Strathclyde police fraud squad, on top of Labour's national executive committee inquiry.

Questions that have too easy an answer

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

YES, it was dull, but it was meant to be. The twice-weekly screaming match is over — for the time being. Now we wonder whether its replacement is any more enlightening.

The new responsible, informative, non-confrontational Prime Minister's Questions reminded me of one of those political interviews before the arrival of Robin Day, which usually went like this: "Prime Minister, thank you for coming to the studio. I believe you have a bill, connected with unemployment."

"Yes I do."

"Could you describe it?"

"Certainly. It is our intention to abolish unemployment, insofar as that proves practicable."

"I am sure the country will be delighted to hear that, Prime Minister. Thank you for coming here tonight."

Tony Blair was slightly more forthcoming. He permitted himself just a faint suspicion of mild aggression, when the Tory Ian Taylor (Esher and Walton) thanked him sarcastically for sparing the time to come to the House. The Prime Minister replied that he had had a busy day, because unlike the last government, "we are actually governing".

But that was about as confrontational as it got. Jean Corston (Labour, Bristol East) inquired whether there would be measures to combat crime,

"The Home Secretary is announcing a series of beneficial measures which we hope will have an effect on cutting crime," he said.

Stuart Bell (Labour, Middlesbrough) told us how excited the whole country was by the 26 bills in the Queen's Speech. "What *will* you do for an encore?"

An awful truth dawned: there are going to be as many Labour greasers as there were Tories. It's just that their style will be different, consisting of theatrical, luvvie-type flattery.

Mr Blair wouldn't be drawn into anger. One MP protested about privatised bus companies. Weren't they a shameful indictment of the last government?

"In the spirit of non-confrontation, I'll leave 'shaming indictment' on one side," said Mr Blair. He followed with a little joke. He intended to have the deputy prime minister look at the regulatory system "as well as his rain-making duties". Courteous laughter ensued.

There was one moment which suggested that the Old Labour beasts still lurk in the foliage. Peter Luff (Conservative, Mid-Worcestershire) asked a frightfully responsible and non-confrontational question about the windfall tax. What happens when it dries up?

"Then we'll 'ave another one!" jeered one unreconstructed, northern voice.

But the Tories seemed oddly quiet and disorganised. No doubt things will change when they have a new leader — if they ever get round to choosing one.

We did have one last evocative Majorism: "The tax on fat cats will in fact be a tax which attacks those who have least." Almost poetic.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Chirac's gamble comes unstuck

JACQUES CHIRAC has always been a man who likes ambiguity. He is imbued with the Gaullist tradition that has given rightwing politics in France a special flavour at least since the end of the second world war — market economics within a framework of strong government intervention, respect for the rights of the individual combined with efforts to minimise inequalities and preserve social solidarity. To this platform of strategic ambivalence Mr Chirac has added a tactical flexibility of a unique kind. In his two years as president he has turned his hand to an extraordinary series of zig-zags on virtually every issue from nuclear weapons testing to Europe to unemployment and immigration.

Now, after giving the French people the option of an early parliamentary election, the voters have thrown ambiguity back into the president's face. They have left him to sweat out a week of uncertainty with a first-round result that could go either way on June 1. The centre-right coalition might squeak through to the narrowest of majorities. Or it might fail, leaving the president with the need to cohabit with an opposition government for the next five years.

While the prospect for the final result remains clouded, two points stand out with crystal clarity from the first round. Mr Chirac's gamble in dissolving the National Assembly a year early has been lost. Voters have punished him for what they perceived as an effort to manipulate the constitution. A president who calls early elections to win a larger mandate for a government with a narrow majority can be understood. "Give us the tools to finish the job" is a legitimate appeal in any democratic system. A president who goes to the polls early when his party has an overwhelming majority looks as if he is pulling a fast one. That is how the voters saw it, and they were right.

The issue on which they felt they were being tricked was the European single currency. They suspected with reason that the president and his prime minister, Alain Juppé, were preparing a new tightening of the screw to achieve the Maastricht criteria at the expense of another rise in already record levels of unemployment. Roughly 70 per cent of voters went for parties that are against the present interpretation of Maastricht.

Although the extremist National Front has benefited with a 3 per cent increase in its vote, the greatest surge has gone to the Socialists. The effect should not be exaggerated since the Socialists' share of the vote is still well down on the parliamentary elections of 1986 and 1988. But they have achieved a swing of some 9 per cent since the low point of 1993. Great credit goes to the Socialist leader Lionel Jospin, who managed to project an image of decency and compassion as well as clarity on the central theme of the euro.

The month-long campaign may have been disappointing in that there was no real debate on the euro. But that was the fault of Juppé and the right who tried to evade the issue. One-sidedly, in view of the government's abdication, the other parties hammered home their arguments to successful and convincing effect. The electorate rejected a "banker's Europe", or — in the words of the joint Socialist-Communist declaration — "a Europe ruled by the financial markets, a Europe where money is king".

Blair brings new cheer to Europe

FRESH FROM three weeks of radical changes in Britain, Tony Blair last week took his reformist zeal into Europe. At the Noordwijk summit — which paves the way for this month's European Union treaty signing in Amsterdam — he called on member countries to refocus on things "that really matter to the people of Europe", such as jobs, competitiveness, the environment and consumer rights. He combined strongly pro-European rhetoric with an equally strong promise that he would stand up for Britain's interests where they mattered, such as control over borders and making sure that the Social Chapter doesn't become an unnecessary burden on business.

Mr Blair's positive commitment to Europe was a breath of fresh air to other heads of state reared on the anti-European bleatings of a fractious Conservative party. Even though he wasn't saying much that was new it was the fact that Britain would for once be swimming with the tide and not against it. Having a fresh British government with positive views is good for Britain and good for Europe because it will help to turn the EU into a practical project that people can identify with, rather than an historical commitment which often seems remote from British people's lives.

The question the rest of European most wants answered wasn't addressed. Will he or won't he lead Britain into an early entry into the common currency? From a technical point of view there was no need to address it because the single currency isn't on the Amsterdam agenda. Monetary union has already been agreed under the Maastricht treaty (from which Britain negotiated an opt-out). Until recently few people in Britain would have seriously raised the question even though Labour has always kept its options open. Conspiracy theorists, however, could argue that an extrapolation of the events of the past month — a totally unexpected decision to give the Bank of England its independence followed by an even more totally unexpected decision to hive off the Bank's supervisory functions — could lead to Mr Blair going the whole hog.

Labour's first month in office has been very impressive by any standards but it has also thrown up a weakness: there appears to be no one in government looking for the unexpected side-effects that new policies inevitably throw up. By pulling the rug from underneath the Governor of the Bank of England they have undone much of the confidence in the City that was patiently built up through five years of prawn cocktail offensives. That may have been the result of inexperience rather than malice but it underlines that getting policies right is much more important than getting them quickly. No economic decision in this parliament is more important than the single currency. It must be thought through long and hard.

Catalogue of crime

ANYONE still tempted to believe that Thatcherism solved more problems than it created might usefully study the 1996 International Crime Victimisation Survey. One of the most deeply held beliefs among modern New Right thinkers and politicians of the Thatcher school is that economic liberalism and social conservatism must go hand in hand. Throughout the Thatcher years — and after — rightwing politicians in Britain believed that rising crime was a byproduct of socialist values and organisation, and that it could principally be turned around by the application of more restrictive laws, tougher policing and stricter penal policies.

Well, here we are, 18 years later — and has it worked? Michael Howard, the former home secretary, would say that it has, and would cite the successive recent falls in the reported crime figures as proof that the tide has finally begun to turn back. The survey seems to show that it has not. Indeed England and Wales now have a worse crime record than almost all the other advanced industrial nations in the survey, including the US itself. Citizens of England and Wales are more likely than others to be victims of crime, to be burgled and to have their motor cars stolen. But what will shock them to the core is the finding that they also face the same statistical likelihood of robbery, assault and sexual attack as the supposedly much more violent Americans. Not surprisingly, the survey says that Britain is one of the countries in the world which is now most pressured by crime.

Victim-based crime surveys always need to be read with care and can sometimes be used to create a more frightening picture than actually exists. Victim surveys always show that there is more crime than report-based surveys, but they also put crime and the danger of crime into their true perspective. Even on this survey, it is by no means clear that social cohesion in Britain is actually falling apart. People may be unusually fearful to walk the streets at night, but the chances of them becoming victims of crime if they do so are actually quite modest. A society in which 97 per cent of the population go through the year without being attacked is not a violent society, even though it is shocking that the remaining 3 per cent are not so fortunate. And the British retain a healthy (and on the whole justified) satisfaction in the work of the police, which is an important asset in mobilising public support for anti-crime strategies, or would be if the strategies followed in Britain in recent years had seriously addressed its real rather than imagined needs.

Where the US leads, can Europe follow?

Martin Woollacott

AN IMMENSE network of airfields, barracks, navy bases, army camps and missile silos, together with their supporting factories, laboratories, and administrative offices, stretches thickly across the northern hemisphere.

We cannot imagine life without it. It seems critical for industry and technology and in national psychology even as, for all but the United States, military dependence on other nations increases. This is the multinational system that the US, Russia and the European countries are trying to control and re-order.

The problems of this system, an inheritance from history, are huge. There are deep changes going on under the surface in the countries of Nato and the old Warsaw Pact, driven by shifts in technology and military doctrine, which are shaping events as surely as formal talks between politicians and soldiers.

Indeed they tend to push in a different direction from that in which President Bill Clinton and the other leaders who were due to sign the Russia-Nato charter this week in Paris, want to go. Technology and commercial competition are carving out new frontiers at the same time as the politicians are trying to overcome old ones.

It might be argued, for instance, that the quarrel between Europe and the US over the Boeing-McDonnell merger is as or more important than the Nato-Russia agreement. The purpose of US policy is to create effective security ties with Russia, while meeting both east European and west European demands for changes within Nato. The effect of this might be, in time, to both expand and consolidate the military condominium — the pooled, internationally regulated, and compatible body of military force — which Nato to some extent already represents. But the pressure of the subterranean changes tends to push in an opposite direction, pulling America, Europe, and Russia toward different military destinations.

The "three Rs" of military life at the end of the century are revolution, regression and relegation. The first is the US's drama, the second is Russia's fate, the third is Europe's nightmare. The American military is involved in a debate over what is called the "revolution in military affairs". The more radical exponents, such as Admiral William A Owens, believe that the combination of almost perfect surveillance with instantaneous, protected communications and precision weapons will soon transform war. "For the first time in the history of mankind, we will see the battlefield," he says. The fog of war — the fact that you can know only part of what is happening on the battlefield — could, "in two to five years" be dispersed.

The capacity to achieve "information dominance" opens up the prospect of high-speed conflicts, of which the Gulf war is seen as the precursor, in which the opponent can be vanquished at minimal cost in casualties to the US. Some sceptics suggest that technology will never advance so far. Others say that, even if it does, the effect will be to force the US's enemies to wage a different kind of war, through covert campaigns of sabotage and assassination from inside civilian society, in which sensors and smart weapons are simply not relevant.

Whatever happens in the debate, it does illustrate the fact that the US armed forces and defence industry are drawing further and further ahead of their allies in Europe and their old enemy and new partner, Russia. There was always a technological gap, but in the past that was more evident in nuclear weaponry than in conventional arms. Now the US is achieving a clearer and clearer conventional edge. The US military has an unrivalled capacity to project power, the country's defence industry is a giant in a world of midgets.

The US Marine Corps alone is as big as the British army, while by 2001 it is estimated that the US will be spending on defence four times as much as Britain, France, and Germany combined. By that time, even if Europe has succeeded in the painful task of merging its defence companies into a smaller and leaner group, it will still almost certainly be outclassed at just the moment when it wants to have the capacity to act on its own.

One potential effect of this on the alliance is to dislocate it into a managing power and collection of troop providers. The other is to undermine Europe's and particularly France's pretensions to military autonomy. The important question may be not whether Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic will be "second class" members of Nato but whether France, Germany and Britain will be.

IF EUROPE fears relegation, Russia experiences regression. Boris Yeltsin last week sacked the defence minister who had been warning for months that "by 2001 or thereabouts our country's defences will be in ruins" unless he was given the money to avoid that fate. The Russian dilemma is that military reform is as expensive as leaving things as they are, and nobody knows how to find the resources to do either. Defence spending is now less than 10 per cent of that of the US. Russia's defence industry staggers from year to year, but is inevitably losing capability.

What are the dangers of these divergent trends? The US's temptation to see its defence effort and its defence needs in a unique or, worse, isolationist way is reinforced. Europe's temptation to let imagination rule in military matters, pretending to an autonomy which it is not willing to pay for, is reinforced. Russia's temptation to see its military as the victim of a Western conspiracy, and this, in turn, as a metaphor for a more general Western hostility, is reinforced.

The capacity to use military power collectively — a capacity certainly needed even if too often proposed as the answer to every emergency — could also suffer because the US will be bemused by hi-tech toys, the Europeans will be under-equipped, and the Russians will lack even the basics.

Dangers seen can be dangers avoided. This is more important than whether Russia has a voice or a veto in Nato's affairs, or whether Nato's Southern Command gets a European commander.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
June 1 1997

Le Monde

France's misconstrued role in Zaire

COMMENT
Alain Franchon

THE MEDIA have already delivered their verdict. With Mobutu's departure, France has lost an African protégé and has registered a diplomatic defeat commensurate with its attachment to one of the largest Francophone countries in the world.

Paris's influence in Zaire will fade in favour of the United States, which will install its own protégé in Kinshasa, Laurent-Désiré Kabila and his entourage of young US-trained aides. Paris loses, Washington wins.

In truth, the "client-patron" relationship is not quite so simple — at least in Africa. Paris does not have as much influence over Mobutu as some believe, and Washington, evidently, does not have control over Kabila.

Jacques Godfrain, France's minister for co-operation, dismisses "the cliché that Kabila means the US and Mobutu means France".

He said that France, after seeking regional talks and security for the refugees, refused to choose either Kabila or Mobutu but rather to advocate "elections which were due to take place anyway in June".

His line of defence, constructed after the "defeat", contains a number of flaws. It does not take into account a series of mistakes — unofficially acknowledged in high places — that explain why Paris has suffered a real setback in Zaire.

The first error was France's delayed reaction to Zaire's changing political situation. "We took far too long to review our policy in Zaire," some officials confess. Next, there was a fundamental analytical error — the assumption that Mobutu could not be ignored, which was strongly maintained in Paris throughout April, was "absurd", the sources admit.

In short, France's errors stemmed from the involvement of so many different parties in the decision-making about the crisis. African policy is agreed upon by no fewer than four government departments.

Moreover French reaction was affected by its policy in the region since 1994. France, particularly during François Mitterrand's presidency, was the ally of the Rwandan regime that spawned the genocide against the Tutsis in 1994.

France's Operation Turquoise saved many lives; but it also enabled hundreds of Hutu leaders responsible for the slaughter to escape. There are suspicions they may have benefited from French complicity.

It marked a turning point in French policy in Zaire. In order to secure the logistic bases of Operation Turquoise and later to "house" hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees fleeing the new Tutsi regime in Kigali, France needed Zaire.

In Paris, as in Washington and Brussels, Mobutu was in "quarantine", having been an undesirable for two or three years because of his rampant corruption. France, and Nelson Mandela's South Africa for different reasons, helped to prop up an ailing dictator increasingly absent from Kinshasa.

By doing so, France came to be viewed as having clung to the Kigali regime and defended Mobutu for too long. When a new episode in the Great Lakes crisis was about to be played out in Zaire, Paris was an object of suspicion both to the new Rwandan authorities and the Zairean rebels, who were largely Kigali's creation.

It was this recent history that aroused suspicions that France's intention in sending a military and humanitarian force to aid Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire was really to halt the rebellion and prop up Mobutu's ailing regime.

The idea was to help the Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire. Later developments were to demonstrate, in dramatic fashion, that the offer was very much to the point but, unfortunately, France lacked the credibility to be able to champion it convincingly.

Washington also contributed to the rehabilitation of Mobutu ("a man of good sense", according to President Reagan) whose regime owed much more to the US than to France. But that did not prevent Washington from sending a diplomat (the second-ranking official at its embassy in Kigali) to Kabila nor from supporting the rebellion he launched in eastern Zaire.

There was no clear regional division, as was later suggested — with on one side Washington's protégés Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and on the other Mobutu, championed by France.

As Jean-François Bayert, director of the Centre of International Studies and Research recently pointed out: "Museveni has always been very open to co-operation and investment from Paris. France has thus become one of Uganda's leading economic partners, whereas its interests in Zaire have remained practically non-existent."

This is the paradox: while it gave the impression of being tied to Mobutu's regime, France had very little trade with Zaire, and virtually no investment there.

If, as some observers are now saying, France has "lost" Zaire, then it has not lost much. The big investors in Zaire are, and have always been, the US, Belgium and South Africa. Paris is keen to point out that "Mobutu's Zaire has never been our patch". A Francophone country only as a result of having been a Belgian colony, a regime created and sustained by the US, Mobutu's Zaire was never really part of France's preserve.

The US will now confront the same problem under Kabila that France has faced with Mobutu. Washington faces a crisis in which — rightly or wrongly — it is cast in the role of Kabila's protector. The US may not view this as something to celebrate.

(May 18-19)

Thousands flee fighting in Colombia

Anne Proenza in Bogotá

CONTINUAL clashes between the army and guerrilla groups have so far driven almost 1 million Colombians from their homes. The exodus has reached such proportions that the Argentine newspaper Clarin recently warned: "All that it will take for Colombia to end up becoming Latin America's Rwanda is for the population that has been displaced by the violence to start fleeing the country".

A month ago, dozens of peasant families fled over the border into Panama. They were recently repatriated by the Colombian government, which has given them land on the Pacific coast.

The large-scale displacement in the north of Colombia has prompted the government unofficially to invite the United Nations to open an office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bogotá.

Pending a formal request, the organisation has assigned a permanent official to the Colombian capital. The European Union's office for humanitarian aid recently approved a budget of $5.5 million to help displaced Colombians.

Colombia has long ignored the peasants who have been fleeing the violence in the countryside and streaming into towns to swell the ranks of the poor.

In the past two years, however, the numbers have grown. Figures from Defensoria del Pueblo, the national body that keeps track of complaints on human rights violations, show that about 920,000 people have been displaced by violence in a country that has a population of 35 million.

The issue is seldom raised by authorities or the media. So people were surprised when, on March 28, newspaper and television pictures showed long lines of refugees fleeing the fighting between the army, guerrillas and paramilitary groups around the city of Riosucio in the Choco region. Paramilitary groups were the first to enter the area last winter. Then the guerrilla groups seized the region. And since February Operation Genesis has been causing thousands to flee.

Pavarando, a village with just 40 families, saw the arrival on March 28 of 1,800 refugees. A week later, 3,400 more arrived. At Turbo the population has gone up by 2,700, three-quarters of them children. More than 10,000 refugees have entered the Uraba region in recent months.

What is new is the massive increase in numbers. Maria Villegas, the Defensoria del Pueblo representative in Apartado, an administrative centre of the Uraba region, said: "Previously, people fled their homes without a word, singly, and almost as if in shame . . . When there is fighting, people from small rural communities flee to villages, then from the villages they move into towns, and later into the capital. A solidarity of sorts develops; with each person who flees his home leaving his house open for the following wave."

Today they are fleeing in their thousands. Villegas, who visited the region, was shocked by the sight of "children sleeping on bare ground." She said, "Neither the minister of the interior nor I have ever seen such destitution."

Addressing a debate on peace in the Colombian parliament last month, one speaker condemned the human rights abuses arising the violence and offered some frightening figures. "Four Colombian families flee their homes every hour because of the violence," he said.

(May 21)

Ankara's war without winners

EDITORIAL

EVERY state is entitled to protect itself against terrorism. This is also true of Turkey, which since 1984 has been grappling with an armed struggle in the eastern part of the country by Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) rebels. But while this is so, the international community cannot indefinitely go on being satisfied with Ankara's invocation of this principle to justify the maintenance of a repressive military law in the eastern part of the country and repeated cross-border forays by the Turkish army.

Turkey's military operations in Iraq over the past four years have become a kind of spring ritual. The number of troops committed to such operations is staggering: up to 50,000 are reportedly being used in the current operation. As the press is excluded from the region, no independent assessment of numbers is ever possible.

The fact that these operations are carried out repeatedly suggests that, from a military viewpoint, they are not effective. Each time the aim is to completely wipe out all the bases from which the PKK launches strikes into Turkey, and each time the operation has to be repeated.

The Turkish army uses the fighters of an Iraqi Kurdish faction lead by Massoud Barzani; they are sent into the front line and given artillery and air support. But this will change nothing. Turkey will not end its Kurdish problem so long as it treats it simply as a question of terrorism and seeks no solution other than a military one. The problem has become worse over the past 10 years in spite of the military and political resources committed to it. It will be the same or worse 10 years from now if Ankara refuses to see it as a political question. Turkey will then go on looking frustratedly towards a Europe that will have turned away from it.

The Kurdish issue gives the army a political role and prevents Ankara reaching the democratic standards of its European neighbours. The drift is aided by a political class incapable of producing a strong and respected government from within its ranks. As a result, the army has been able to take control of part of Turkey's domestic policy (keeping order in the east) as well as an increasing part of its foreign policy.

Turkey's military co-operation with Israel is significant in this respect. It is aimed, among other things, at showing that the army is running the country, rather than the prime minister, the Islamist Welfare party's Necmettin Erbakan. But this co-operation irritates Syria, which will retaliate by rearming the PKK and making it operational again, whatever damage is currently inflicted on it. Once more, it will be back to square one.

(May 21)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Enjoying a dry run success

Gary Oldman talks to **Henri Béhar** about his new film, Nil By Mouth

GARY Oldman, a member of the Cannes jury in 1993, returned to this year's festival, which ended on May 18, in two guises: as an actor in Luc Besson's The Fifth Element, and as scriptwriter and director of his own first feature, Nil By Mouth. The former opened the festival, and the latter was shown in competition (Kathy Burke picked up the best actress award for her performance in the film).

I told Oldman that some people saw similarities between Nil By Mouth and such Ken Loach movies as Riff Raff and Family Life, while others claimed it made Trainspotting look like Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs.

"Where did you hear that?" Oldman said, bursting into laughter. "It's true that Nil By Mouth would never have seen the light of day had it not been for people like Tony Richardson, Ken Loach and Mike Leigh, who laid the foundations of the modern British cinema.

"My editor, who's American, sees more parallels with John Cassavetes. I admit my film was influenced by him. I showed 20 minutes of it to Stephen Frears, who thought it had a 'Scorsese-like vitality'. And Peter Medak said he was reminded of Pasolini. Not bad in the way of portraits to hang up in your gallery of influences!

"One is always influenced by one's surroundings, by the films and film-makers one likes or is touched by. If there's one thing I learned from them, it was to trust my instinct and my subject, and the universe the film describes. If my movie has one quality it's honesty."

Oldman, who was born in 1959 and grew up in south London, had already worked a lot in the theatre when he made his screen debut in Sid And Nancy. His memorably ferocious performance as Sid Vicious, one of the Sex Pistols, turned out to be a mixed blessing, as it took him a long time to shake off that image.



Oldman gets a kiss from Kathy Burke, who won best actress award at Cannes PHOTO: JAQUES MUNCH

Frears' Prick Up Your Ears, in which Oldman plays the English playwright Joe Orton, revealed him as an actor who also had a light touch and an extraordinarily versatile voice. He has proved that he can put on any accent — Irish in Phil Joanon's State Of Grace, American in Murder In The First Degree, New York in Basquiat, and Deep South in The Fifth Element.

It was only a matter of time before Oldman found a story that moved him so deeply he was tempted to go over to directing. That is what happened with Nil By Mouth. Yet he immediately dismisses any suggestion it might be an autobiographical film.

"There's no basic difference between making a movie like this and playing Dracula," he says. "You get involved, you get under the skin of a character, you give him a three-dimensional existence. And to do that you draw on your own experience, your own story. I've often seen films that claim to depict the kind of milieu I came from, the part of London I grew up in. They're all phoney and artificial.

"There are things in Nil By Mouth that I experienced or observed, people who were close to me, others who I saw little of but who influenced me, snatches of dialogue I heard when I was a teenager. By transposing that reality I attenuated it. It would have been unbearable otherwise."

Oldman spent a year writing and then filming "this idea that was going round in my head". The decisive moment came when "the alcoholic I used to be stopped drinking. There wouldn't have been any Nil By Mouth if I hadn't been sober. The movie is about dependence, about the impact of any addiction — alcohol, drugs, overeating, sex — on the individual who is affected and those around him."

Did the film mark a particular stage in his drying-out process? "Without any doubt. The movie alludes to the 12 steps in the Alcoholics Anonymous programme. The other day I said to a friend: 'I must be the first alcoholic in history with a fourth and fifth step in competition at Cannes.'"

Wasn't his decision to direct also motivated by the frustration inherent in the job of any actor, whose performance on the screen is always remodelled by somebody else? "It's true that, unlike acting in a play, where you are in control, your performance in a film is like a letter you put in the post: once it is in the mailbox you lose control of it.

"The process has less to do with collaboration than with a kind of benign dictatorship. It would be churlish of me to complain: it's an incredibly gratifying job, you're well paid, you get to travel around the world, you meet some quite remarkable people. But after 20 years of working in the cinema, theatre and television, you're bound to end up getting bored. You almost get the feeling you've played everything there is to play. It was also my fault. I allowed myself to get typecast. There are all sorts of reasons why you decide whether or not to do a movie, and many are of a practical nature.

"Then the misunderstanding stuck. People were quick to see parallels between Gary Oldman and the characters he plays. They thought I was a madman, so they claimed I was difficult. That regularly surprises me: I always turn up on time, and I always know my lines."

Had a role ever provided him with a solution to a personal psychological problem? "If I took my cue from most of the characters I've played I'd immediately end up in clink," he laughed. "For a long time I believed in the theory that an actor can always exorcise his personal demons through the parts he plays. I don't really believe that any more."

On top of the film he is writing at the moment, Oldman will appear in Terrence Malick's next movie, The Thin Red Line. It is almost 20 years since the director of Badlands and Days Of Heaven disappeared from the film scene.

"When he called me, my first reaction was: 'What? Terrence Malick knows my name? Terrence Malick likes my work a lot? Wow!' . . . It was clinched very quickly. I said to him: 'I'd play a shadow on a wall in any film of yours. So the answer's yes.'"

(May 8)

Extra screens fuel French cinema boom

Sylvie Léna

THE annual figures just published by the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), France's official film authority, show that 1996 was a good year for the French film industry.

No fewer than 233 new screens opened during the year (almost twice as many as in 1995), bringing the total number to 4,519. The increase was due partly to the opening of multiplexes in cities, but also to the CNC's policy, with the financial backing of local authorities, of encouraging an even spread of cinemas throughout the country.

The number of films produced rose from 97 to 104, and remains higher than in any other European country. New directorial talent continues to get a chance to express itself: more than half the films were directors' first or second efforts.

Attendances rose to 136.7 million, the highest level since 1987. France leads the rest of Europe as regards the average number of tickets sold per inhabitant — 2.4, compared with Germany's 1.5 and Italy's 1.6 (1995 figures).

The French cinema was a major beneficiary of the increased attendances, earning 51 million ticket sales and a market share of 37.5 per cent. This meant that French films drew more people than at any time in the past 10 years. But there was a continuing trend towards a small number of films gaining the lion's share of attendances: in 1996, 20 out of 391 new films shown cornered 43 per cent of attendances.

French television channels, the biggest source of finance for the film industry (42 per cent), chipped in with 3 billion francs ($520 million) in 1996. The total amount of aid going to the industry (1.16 billion francs) went up, although direct state subsidies decreased. It was mainly funded by television levies (up 10 per cent) and the tax on ticket sales.

(May 9)

Mozart strikes a chord at l'Opéra de Paris

Renaud Machart

HUGUES Gall's reign as head of the Opéra de Paris has at last sprung to life. And it has done so with a production of Mozart's most underestimated and criticised opera, La Clemenza di Tito, the composer's last work for the stage. Written for the crowning of Emperor Leopold II in 1791, the opera has often been dismissed as little more than a late, bread-and-butter work produced by a sick, poverty-stricken composer.

The production was an unexpected delight — unexpected because, although it boasted an impressive cast of singers, it was conducted by Armin Jordan, a man who, despite his magnificent recent account of Parsifal, is notorious for having massacred Mozart on more than one occasion. So it is all the more *gratifying* to be able to congratulate him on his performance at the Palais Garnier on May 13.

Jordan is not the kind of conductor one would expect to coax a baroque colour out of the Orchestre de l'Opéra de Paris. But once I had come to terms with a certain rhythmical flabbiness and thickness of sound, I was impressed and utterly convinced by the tenderness of his conducting and the warm lyricism he injected into a score he clearly adores — and rightly so.

Just occasionally it would have been nice to have some brisker staccato passages and sprightlier tempi. I was apparently not alone in feeling this: on two occasions, and somewhat discourteously, Anne Sofie von Otter made it quite clear she wanted to speed things up.

Von Otter started off just a little stiffly. But she soon warmed up and, by the second act, became a convincingly impassioned Sextus. She rendered his schizophrenic despair without losing anything of the elegance, vocal line and impeccable musicality that are her hallmarks.

During her dialogue with the clarinet — a moment of perfect instrumental twinning — von Otter displayed her vast vocal and stylistic culture, acquired mostly from working with John Eliot Gardiner.

Angelika Kirchschlager is being given star treatment by her record company, Sony Classical. As Annius, she proved herself to be an agile mezzo soprano with a clear timbre who knows how to project her voice, as well as a flawless musician and a moving actress. She is, without doubt, a very great singer with a rock-solid technique.

Christine Schäfer is a little short on vocal substance, particularly in the middle register, but she is a fine musician who is equally at home as Lulu, Zerbinetta or Servilia, whom she portrayed here with great vocal and psychological subtlety.

Cynthia Lawrence was totally in control in her difficult role as Vitellia. But her performance would have been even better if she had not slightly overdone things: there were overtones of the drag queen in the way she suggested Vitellia's psychological shift during the opera. But Lawrence is undoubtedly a prima donna in the best sense.

David Pittsinger gave an honest performance as Publius. The tenor Keith Lewis lent Titus a subtle depth of character. His voice cracked on some of the top notes in the first act. But in the second half he became more self-assured, and was successful in steering Titus from the trauma he experiences early on in the opera to his moving display of all-embracing compassion at the end.

The director, Willy Decker, had the idea of placing a huge marble stele in the middle of stage from which a Roman bust gradually emerged as successive layers peeled away. The device might have been a merely facile symbol if it had not acted as a vehicle, rather than an illustration, of the psychological "striptease" taking place on stage.

The costumes were beautiful, simple and effective, while the backdrops consisted of attractive grey and red streaks (reminiscent of the work of the painter Olivier Debré).

This production of La Clemenza di Tito was theatrically and musically invigorating. It proved that the Opéra de Paris, which has too often in the recent past showed signs of running out of steam, is still very much alive and kicking.

(May 17)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

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June 1 1997

The Washington Post

Khatami: Iran's 'Liberal' Ayatollah

John Lancaster in Tehran

MOHAMMAD KHATAMI, Iran's next president, is not your average mullah.

True, he is an ayatollah's son who studied Islamic theology in the spiritual center of Qom, where he wrote and distributed leaflets denouncing the American-backed shah. During the early years of the Islamic republic, he was one of its leading propagandists.

But for all his revolutionary credentials, the Shiite Muslim cleric is considered a relative liberal whose election could presage a significant relaxation of Iran's social and cultural atmosphere and — possibly — a gradual warming of relations with the West.

Currently the head of Iran's national library, Khatami, 54, speaks English and German, is conversant in the works of Immanuel Kant and Alexis de Tocqueville and, as culture minister for 11 years, encouraged the post-revolutionary flowering of Iranian cinema, according to associates, foreign diplomats and political analysts.

Unlike many of his fellow mullahs, Khatami enjoys a reputation for personal probity. He drives a boxy Iranian-made Paykan instead of a Mercedes-Benz and lives modestly in a two-story town house on Revolutionary Guard Street in north Tehran. Married and the father of three children, Khatami is said to enjoy mountain hikes and a good game of table tennis.

The contrast between Khatami and the hard-line clerics who dominate Iran's political establishment is such that some Iranians refer to him half-jokingly as Ayatollah Gorbachev, after the leader of the former Soviet Union who opened that country to the West in the late 1980s.

"He was definitely the anti-establishment vote," said an individual who worked for Khatami for several years in the 1980s and has remained in contact with him. "People shouldn't interpret that as thinking he's not an advocate of the Islamic revolution, but he's a much more broad-minded advocate".

When he went to Khatami's office in November to urge him to run for president, this person recalled, he found Khatami writing a translation in longhand of Tocqueville's classic treatise on American democracy. "We talked about de Tocqueville, and he said, 'I'm not going to comment on what the Americans have done, but obviously the question of achieving democracy is essential to achieving human potential,'" the associate recalled.

"He is not someone who considers democracy alien to Islam," he added. "He thinks it's right there, but the Muslims have missed it."

Born in the city of Yazd in the desert of southwestern Iran, Khatami is the son of a well-known ayatollah, Ruhollah Khatami, who was a friend and early supporter of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the father of the Iranian revolution. Khatami, in fact, is linked to Khomeini by family; his brother is married to Khomeini's granddaughter.

After finishing his theological studies at Qom and Isfahan, Khatami got degrees in education and philosophy. He became friends with Khomeini's son, Ahmed, according to an official biography, and went to work for the Militant Clerics' Association, which rallied opposition to the shah's regime.

Eventually he came to the attention of Ayatollah Mohammed Beheshti, chief ideologue of the Islamic Republican Party and a key tactician of the revolution. In 1978, Beheshti appointed him to run the Islamic Center of Hamburg, a European nerve center of the Iranian revolution.

He returned to Iran in 1979 and took over the Kayhan Institute, which publishes several newspapers. In 1982, he was appointed minister of culture and Islamic guidance, which oversees Iranian films, publishing and mass media.

As culture minister, a job he held for more than a decade, Khatami encouraged Iranian filmmakers to participate in international festivals, eased restriction on the content of books and periodicals, and expanded the list of foreign magazines and newspapers allowed to enter the country, according to several associates. He overturned a ban on live music.

Khatami's relatively permissive policies won him many enemies, who finally forced his resignation in 1992. "Every day it was something new," recalled Ahmad Boorjani, a journalist who is close to the Khatami campaign. "'Why did you give a license to that newspaper?' 'Why did you give a license to that book?' It was every day. It wasn't any single incident."

Since Khatami left, "we have followed a downward trend," said Dariush Mehrjouie, one of Iran's best-known filmmakers. "They still go on producing films, but they're more restrictive."

Although Khatami largely avoided controversy in his campaign rhetoric, he also hinted at the need for greater freedom of expression in Iran.

"Our backwardness is not due to natural resources or culture — we have both," he told a jubilant crowd last week. "Iranians are smart and creative, they are known for confidence and bravery. The problem is due to the lack of a correct, independent government. People do not have the opportunity to grow. Growth . . . needs sympathy, cooperation, presence in the social scene. It does not mean we should not allow different views."



Khatami supporters in Tehran last week PHOTO: JAMSHID BAIRAMI

Vatican Says Its Envoy Is Innocent

Vera Haller in Vatican City

THE VATICAN strongly defended its former envoy to Argentina last week against what it called slanderous accusations that he was involved in human-rights violations during what became known as that country's "dirty war."

Cardinal Pio Laghi, who now heads the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education, also denied the charges leveled by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, a group that has actively campaigned on behalf of victims of Argentina's former military dictatorship.

Representatives of the group came to Rome last week and announced at a news conference that they had asked the Italian Justice Ministry to investigate Laghi for alleged complicity in torture, murder and kidnapping while he was the Vatican's ambassador to Argentina from 1974 to 1980.

The mothers said they want Pope John Paul II to lift Laghi's diplomatic immunity so he can be prosecuted.

Critics have long charged that the Roman Catholic Church in Argentina failed to use its voice and stature to oppose brutal excesses of the military regime that ruled from 1976 to 1983. Unlike in some other parts of Latin America, where Catholic bishops and priests espoused left-leaning liberation theology, in Argentina the church was a conservative institution, opposed to the leftist influence that the country's military rulers were trying to eliminate.

"We understand and share the pain of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, of every other group and individual, but we maintain that making a moral attack against the non-existent responsibility of the then-apostolic nuncio is an act against justice, honesty and historic truth," the Vatican's daily newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, said in a commentary. Ambassadors from the Vatican carry the title of apostolic nuncio.

The Vatican commentary was published alongside texts of Laghi's denial and a statement of solidarity by the executive committee of the Argentine bishops' conference. Laghi said the accusations were "defamatory and devoid of content and foundation."

"My work as apostolic nuncio in Argentina from July 1, 1974, to the end of December 1980 is well documented by both the bishops of Argentina and [the Vatican's] secretary of state," he said in the statement, which also was read on Vatican Radio and released by the Vatican's press office. "The documents are in their hands."

In his current post, Laghi oversees Catholic school teaching around the world. He also was the Vatican's ambassador to the United States from 1984 to 1990.

Agreement to Outlaw Foreign Payoffs

Paul Blustein

THE WORLD'S richest nations have reached an agreement to outlaw foreign commercial bribery by their corporations, according to Clinton administration officials, who said the pact could end an important competitive advantage that European and Japanese companies enjoy over their American rivals.

The United States is the only major nation that makes it a criminal offense to bribe a foreign official while conducting business overseas. So the accord, struck last week by the 29 member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), would essentially force companies from other advanced countries to follow rules similar to those binding U.S. firms.

That is a result long sought by the administration and by anti-corruption activists, who hailed the pact as a significant move toward stemming the spread of payoffs and kickbacks in the fast-growing markets of the developing world.

"We're very pleased," said Fritz Heiman, chairman of the U.S. chapter of Transparency International, an organization that monitors global corruption and presses for anti-bribery measures. "The 29 OECD member states are the home bases of practically every major international company around the world. So OECD action on foreign bribery is really the key step in addressing the whole supply side to international bribery."

Commerce Secretary William M. Daley, in a prepared statement, called the agreement "a major step forward" toward curbing a practice that "is a major distortion of international trade and has a corrosive effect on economic and political development."

Under the accord, members of the OECD, a Paris-based club of industrialized nations, would sign an anti-bribery convention by the end of this year. They would introduce laws in their national legislatures by next April that would subject their companies to criminal penalties for bribing foreign officials while soliciting business.

The accord, slated to be formally approved by economic and trade ministers from the 29 countries at a meeting in Paris this week, represents a compromise that Washington struck with France and Germany after a long and sometimes bitter dispute. In France and Germany, bribes paid to foreign officials are not only legal, they are tax deductible.

Until last week, Paris and Bonn were staunchly holding out against a U.S. proposal, backed by most other OECD countries, to collectively pledge to pass anti-bribery laws next year.

Backed by Japan and Spain, France and Germany were asserting that the only way to ensure fairness was to negotiate a binding convention. Their position was denounced by U.S. officials and by Transparency International, which feared a convention would delay action for years.

The impasse was broken by combining the convention proposal with the collective pledge to legislate — and adding deadlines. "What's particularly important here is that these are finite time periods, and short time periods," said a Commerce official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The agreement does not guarantee that bribery will disappear in international transactions. European officials and business executives have long contended that even U.S. firms, banned from making payoffs under the Foreign Corrupt Practice Act of 1977, sometimes use agents and subterfuge to pay bribes on big contracts.

But many U.S. business executives maintain they often lose deals because of foreign rivals greasing palms, and even when they don't they are burdened with costly requirements for ensuring that disbursements are legitimate and properly accounted for.

Air Force Fires Top Woman Bomber Pilot

Bradley Graham and Tamara Jones

LT. KELLY FLINN ended her emotional confrontation with the Air Force last week, agreeing to resign without an honorable discharge to avoid a court-martial over an adulterous affair.

Announcing the decision to grant the first female B-52 pilot the sanction of a general discharge, Air Force Secretary Sheila E. Widnall said the allegations that weighed most heavily against Flinn were those of disobedience and dishonesty, rather than adultery.

A general discharge denotes some negative performance by a service member and will require Flinn to reimburse the Air Force for part of her Air Force Academy training. It also will preclude her from flying in the Air Force reserves unless she is granted a waiver. Her family said she will seek such a waiver.

Air Force authorities were plainly relieved to have avoided a high-profile trial of an officer whose case had gained widespread sympathy and stirred a national debate over the fairness with which the military services have prosecuted sexual misconduct cases.

"Clearly, I focused on the fundamental underlying values in this case, the values of officership and the importance of integrity to the Air Force and our absolute need to maintain order and discipline," Widnall said at a Pentagon news conference. "And those were the criteria that I used in reaching my decision."

Although Flinn previously insisted she would accept only an honorable discharge in place of a trial, she reportedly was resigned to the outcome, which came after a series of behind-the-scenes talks between Air Force officials and Flinn's representatives.

At a news conference at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, where Flinn is based, Flinn's attorney, Frank Spinner, said, "Lt. Flinn decided to place the best interests of the Air Force ahead of her own."

Flinn did not appear publicly after the decision was announced. But her mother, Mary, told reporters: "The family felt it was a no-win situation and the Air Force would attempt to make an example of her. We urged her to amend her resignation before the Air Force she loved could destroy her completely."

Word that Widnall would deny an honorable discharge reached Flinn's entourage through unofficial channels on Wednesday last week, and family members said they stayed up all night with Flinn discussing her options.

As a result of having left military service in lieu of a court-martial, Flinn will not be entitled to veterans' benefits.

How her discharge may affect her prospects of employment by a commercial airline or other civilian firm will depend on the attitude of the employer. It does not legally bar her from any civilian jobs, but "it's not generally considered a positive thing," said one Air Force official.

According to Air Force regulations, a general discharge "is separation from the Air Force with honor, but to a lesser degree than the honorable discharge." It "is given when normally faithful service is marred by negative aspects of a person's duty performance or personal conduct, but the negative aspects definitely outweigh the good."



First Lt. Kelly J. Flinn leaves the legal building at Minot Air Force Base before agreeing to a general discharge PHOTO: CHARLES BENNETT

Flinn, who is single, faced up to 9½ years in prison if she was convicted of all the charges she faced: adultery, fraternization, conduct unbecoming an officer and making a false official statement.

What began as an illicit romance between two people on a recreational soccer team last summer turned a desolate Air Force base into the floodlit stage for a military morality play. In a carefully orchestrated publicity campaign in recent weeks, Flinn portrayed herself as the lovelorn victim of a manipulative con man, Marc Zigo, who proposed marriage, then betrayed her.

For its part, the Air Force had a difficult time making its point that the case against Flinn rested less on the adultery allegation and more on the charge that she broke the bond of military trust when she signed a false statement and disobeyed her commander's order to avoid Zigo.

Widnall, asked if she considered the outcome a victory for the Air Force, said: "I don't look at it in terms of a victory. I think this has been a very difficult case. It has clearly occupied a good percentage of my time, and I am satisfied that the resolution we have reached in this case is fair."

Documents Reveal CIA Hit List

Walter Pincus

THE CIA considered assassinating Guatemalan leaders more than 40 years ago, reviewing a list of 58 targets and training some gunmen for the job, but the killings were not carried out, the agency said last week.

The disclosure came as the CIA announced the release of 1,400 pages of once-classified records describing a covert action that caused the collapse of the government of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz in June 1954. Arbenz fled to Cuba and eventually into exile in Mexico.

Although most details of the Guatemalan operation have been well known for years, the release of documents was the first time the CIA disclosed assassinations had been contemplated.

The Eisenhower administration acted against Arbenz because he was viewed as a leftist. "There was considerable communist influence within his government, giving rise to fears that Guatemala could become a Soviet client state," a CIA official said.

In the end, a paramilitary force of exiled Guatemalans was trained and sent into the country to create pressure on Arbenz and "persuade military leaders inside the government to cooperate in a coup against Arbenz," the agency said.

The military action was coordinated with a propaganda campaign against Arbenz; two weeks after the invasion he resigned and left the country.

In the 1960s, the agency undertook covert actions that included assassination attempts, including against Cuban President Fidel Castro, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of the Belgian Congo and the Dominican Republic's dictator Rafael Trujillo. The Castro efforts failed; although Lumumba died in a plane crash and Trujillo was shot, a 1975 congressional investigation found neither death was a result of the CIA's actions.

The Guatemala assassination material was not made available to Capitol Hill investigators during the 1975 House and Senate hearings on the agency and was only discovered in 1979, the agency said.

However, when the American public learned in 1973 that the CIA had considered assassination as a policy, then-CIA Director William E. Colby prohibited further agency involvement in such action. In 1976, then-President Gerald R. Ford issued an executive order banning any U.S. government employee from involvement in assassination. That prohibition, expanded by President Jimmy Carter, remains in effect.

Arguments still take place within the agency about the merits of the current policy, primarily because it has kept planners from undertaking covert operations that might as a side effect lead to some killings, according to retired and active agency officers.

One official pointed to the Bush administration's military invasion of Panama to capture that country's dictator, Manuel Antonio Noriega, which took place after agency officials said that a covert action to seize him might lead to his assassination.

Foreign Aid 'Has No Impact'

Paul Blustein

TWO economists from the World Bank have concluded in a study that the billions of dollars in foreign aid showered on poor countries since 1970 has produced no net impact on the overall economic performance of the Third World, nor on the economic policies of the recipient countries.

This conclusion may seem less than startling to anyone familiar with horror stories about foreign aid being squandered by incompetent or corrupt government officials.

But the World Bank is the fountainhead of development assistance, hardly a likely source for such embarrassing research about the ineffectiveness of aid. Small wonder that authors Craig Burnside and David Dollar emphasize that their study, which is still in draft form and is scheduled to appear soon in the bank's working paper series, represents their own work rather than the bank's official opinion.

What's most significant about the study is its finding that aid has failed to affect poor countries' choice of policies, "for good or for ill." Ever since the early 1980s, the World Bank and its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund, have sought to use aid as an incentive to get officials in developing nations to reduce inflationary government spending, end wasteful subsidies and curb burdensome bureaucracy.

Critics across the political spectrum argue that this approach hasn't worked, because development agencies all too often impose their prescriptions from their high-and-mighty perches without gaining genuine support from either the elite or the grass-root sectors in the recipient countries. Often the result is that government officials in poor countries take the aid and fail to follow through on their promises for reform, with little or no resulting improvement in economic conditions.

The Burnside-Dollar study tacitly admits the validity of this criticism for the 56 countries it covered. "There are countries such as Ghana in which . . . one can argue that aid has supported policy reform," the authors write. "For each Ghana, however, there is a Zambia, in which policy deteriorated continuously from 1970 until 1993, while aid receipts rose continuously."

All this is music to the ears of Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute who has long criticized foreign aid as a well-intentioned waste. "This is a major step forward and a fairly dramatic change, compared with what has come out of most aid bureaucracies over the past four or five decades," Bandow said.

So should the World Bank and other aid agencies pack up and quit? Unsurprisingly, the study's authors and other bank officials contend that the answer is no. What is needed, they say, is a shift in approach.

China Attacks U.S. Embargo

Seven Mufson in Beijing

CHINA complained last week that U.S. sanctions against two Chinese companies accused of selling chemical weapons materials to Iran were "entirely unreasonable" and demanded that the measures be lifted.

"China expresses its resolute opposition" to the sanctions, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang was quoted by the official New China News Agency as saying.

The United States imposed economic sanctions on two Chinese companies and five Chinese citizens last week for selling chemicals and chemical production equipment to Iran that the State Department said have substantially boosted Tehran's effort to develop poison-gas weapons.

The State Department's order prohibits the import of any goods produced by two Chinese companies, Nanjing Chemical Industries Group and Jiangsu Yongli Chemical Engineering and Technology Import/Export Group, and a Hong Kong company, Cheong Yee Limited.

In an interview with Reuter, an unnamed official of Jiangsu Yongli Chemical, the export arm of its parent company, Nanjing Chemical Industries, denied that his firm had sold material to Iran that could be used in making chemical weapons.

Both China and Iran have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, an international treaty barring the manufacture, sale or use of nerve-gas weapons. China also has ratified it, thus assuming a legal obligation to comply with its provisions.

American concern about Chinese weapons assistance to Iran comes in the context of warming Chinese relations with key Middle East nations. Lured by the promise of oil supplies, China has cultivated relations with Iran and Iraq, while maintaining warm ties with Israel.

On May 10, Iraqi Oil Minister Amir Mohammad Rasheed said in published remarks that his government would soon sign oil deals that would let China help develop huge oil fields in southern Iraq. That announcement came five days after Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen told visiting Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz that China favored an early end to United Nations sanctions on Iraq.

Washington suggests that China is helping Iran in other ways. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright told a Senate subcommittee last week of the Clinton administration's "deep concern" over intelligence reports that China has sold anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran. The missiles would pose a threat to American ships that patrol the Persian Gulf.

Dry Lake's Thirst May Be Quenched

William Booth in Keeler

WHEN the wind begins to blow in this Californian town, everything changes. The pretty valley, with skies so blue, turns to ash. It looks like dense swirling fog. But it is not.

On the shore of the Owens Dry Lake, children are hustled indoors. Residents — hacking, noses bloody from the flying grit — hunker down behind windows sealed with tape, while researchers working on the lake bed don respirators and run for the trucks, fearful of losing the shoreline in the whiteout, as a giant toxic cloud of fine salt and sand, mixed with arsenic and cadmium, rises from the playa, the lake floor.

What is happening is not natural. "There's this doomsday feeling about it," said Mike Patterson, who lives in Cerro Gordo, a ghost town above the lake. "Like something sinister."

The third-largest lake in California was drained by the City of Los Angeles, whose agents — in the most notorious water grab in the West — purchased the entire Owens Valley and its water rights at the beginning of this century, built a 223-mile aqueduct to bring the water to Los Angeles and sucked the lake dry by the 1920s. It was the backdrop, in fictional form, for the 1974 movie Chinatown.

Before the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) bought the valley, the Owens River fed the Owens Lake, which is still pictured as blue on many maps. Historically, the lake was shallow and salty, good for tiny shrimp, flies and algae, but useless for drinking or agriculture. Within a decade of the aqueduct's construction, the lake, once covering 60 square miles, was dry.

But now a reckoning may be at hand. There is nothing more precious in the West, and less appreciated by many of its new arrivals, than water. Cities like Phoenix, Las Vegas and, most perilously, Los Angeles, exist only because they can divert water from distant sources.

Yet now, not only are the thirsty cities of the West being pitted against each other for "oversubscribed water", but they increasingly are being asked to give up water to repair old environmental wrongs: to refill parched estuaries and riverbeds, to re-create natural systems altered in the past by dams and diversions.

And one of the longest running and most bitter battles will take place here in the Owens Valley, where the DWP owns almost all the land and water rights.

As required by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air Act, the air pollution control managers of Owens Valley and Inyo County are pushing ahead with a plan to force the DWP to pay for a massive mitigation project.

During the days when great dust storms blow off Owens Dry Lake, the surrounding towns are subjected to the highest pollution counts for "particulate matter" in the nation. The fugitive dust, as fine as talcum powder, can lodge deep in the lungs, where can cause numerous respiratory illnesses.

"The hacking, coughing, sneezing," Patterson said. "You can feel it getting into your lungs." When the storms begin, Patterson said, people stay indoors, and sometimes wear dust masks or bandannas over their mouths when they must venture outside. To settle the dust, Owens Valley is demanding the DWP spread thousands of tons of gravel on the dry lake bed, enough to fill 175,000 trucks and cover 5,000 acres.

The water department also would be required to plant 9,000 acres of salt grass, creating a marsh 10 times the size of New York's Central Park. And finally, most shocking to the DWP, it would be forced to give up millions of gallons of precious water — about 10 per cent of L.A.'s supply — to refill a portion of the lake. The project's estimated construction costs are approaching $100 million, plus $28 million a year — forever — to purchase new water. The deadline for the fix is 2001.

"They broke it," said Richard Knox, a retired DWP manager and now a self-described watchdog in Owens Valley, offering the popular opinion here. "So they ought to fix it. That's the American way."

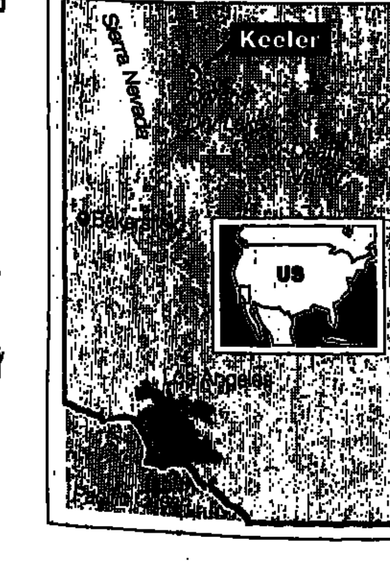
But the DWP is not going to give up a drop of the precious liquid without a fight. Los Angeles water managers have stated they do not think the dust storms are that harmful to health but, even if they are, the DWP does not believe the mitigation efforts will work; and even if the project does work, the department does not think it should write a blank check.

Jerry Gewe, engineer of water resources for the DWP, said the department would request formation of an independent scientific panel and further testing, which would take about five years. And if the department is not happy with the results and plans, it will go to court.

He also mentioned that any decision will involve "a lot of high-level political interplay" and "all sorts of legal actions I'd rather not get into".

If the DWP must replace water used to refill Owens Lake from the open market, it will have to buy it from the Colorado River or Northern California, which would raise water rates for Los Angeles users.

"I like to remind people," Gewe said, "that without imported water, eight of every 10 people living in Los Angeles would have to leave."



Luscious Pleasures

Michael Dirda

THE COMPLETE FICTION
OF W.M. SPACKMAN
Edited and with an afterword
By Steven Moore
Dalkey Archive Press. 634pp. $16.95

WHAT a dream world! In the novels of W.M. Spackman lissome creatures of 20 ardently pursue courtly and seemingly irresistible bankers, painters and professors, most of them Princetonians, nearly all of them past 50, and every last one a lover of extraordinary sophistication and refinement. Picture George Sanders and Cary Grant at their most debonair. Not that Spackman ever actually describes the eiderdown frolics of his amorous couples. Instead he prefers to record "the ballet of coquetry," the musky, hothouse atmosphere of sexual attraction, the coy and knowing social comedy of wooing. His Jove-like heroes and lovesick nymphs gambol their summers away, sipping glasses of champagne, flirting through long, woozy lunches, clinging to each other on smoky dance floors late at night. In such a world, a love affair, preferably adulterous — so much more piquant — demands a delicate connoisseurship: How often the mature must instruct the unruly young in the proper forms and protocols! You may smile, but as Spackman observes and many know, "The scheduling of adultery in a college town is not an exercise for laymen."

W.M. Spackman's most famous novel appeared 19 years ago and its title memorably announced its erotic ebullience: An Armful Of Warm Girl. His third, A Presence With Secrets (1980), exuberantly detailed the affairs of an aging painter, preyed upon by a series of delectable Smith undergraduates, beauties by turns "self-willed, flighty, ungovernably amorous, dithery, lawless, innocent, ruthlessly designing, demure, sly." Two other novels — A Difference Of Design (1983) and A Little Decorum, For Once (1985) — provided further instances of the rich, handsome and well-born headily whirling along to the call of Pan's pipes. Of course, that sensual music was for Spackman more a stylized minuet than an orgiastic dithyramb. Even the most deeply smitten should, after all, preserve "a little decorum, for once."

'The scheduling of adultery in a college town is not an exercise for laymen'

Nearly everyone loves a love story, but Don Juanesque exploits would hardly be enough to establish an author as one of the most original writers of our time. A flair for epigram helps — "No doubt man's private pastime is feeling sorry for himself" — but there is, finally, no substitute for style. W. M. Spackman's syntax cavorts and capers, breathlessly running away from the logic of grammar to achieve a higher fidelity to thought and feeling. Here is one example, cited and analyzed by Steven Moore in his masterly afterword to this omnibus of Spackman's complete fiction:

"Mrs. Barclay being as it turned out late and Nicholas early, or as early anyway as a man in his right mind waiting for a pretty woman, he'd sat damn' near twenty minutes in Veale's unrecognizable bar, bolt-upright and presently glaring, before with a ripple of high heels in fluttered his angel in this breathless rush at last, blissfully gasping 'Oh Nicholas oh simply now imagine!' as he lunged up from the banquette with a happy bellow to grab her — though this act she parried, after one radiant flash of blue eyes, by seizing and tenderly pressing his hands while uttering little winded cries of salutation and reminiscence; and having let him merely peck at one heavenly cheek eeled out of his arms to the seat, onto which she at once sank, blown."

After pointing out this single sentence's velocity, conversational tone, careful choice of verbs, and its balanced sparring between Nicholas and Mrs. Barclay, Moore concludes that "most writers would have taken a page to convey what Spackman does here in a brief paragraph." Such streams of indirect discourse eddy regularly through these 600 pages, though Spackman can be quite plain when he wants: "As a summer project, she was reading Virginia Woolf entire. This, in a young wife as beautiful as Caroline, is an inscrutable omen." Soon, we realize, the lovely Caro will stoop to folly, or at least succumb to the hero's blandishments. More typically a young siren will mull over the pros and cons of seducing her host: "Because all this talk about honor, heavens! when I thought what if really I have only to stretch out my hand for him, wife of his guest or not? oh mon pauvre Alain how mean I could so easily be to you, I could be absolutely petrie de mechancete, goodness what lovely fun, shall I, or shall I?" Given the polish of his novels and their tone of upper-class nonchalance, it is little wonder that Spackman frequently laces his sentences with unitalicized French, Italian and Latin. Rather, I suppose, like a sip of marc with one's after-dinner coffee.

All these — style, subject matter, foreign phrases — may be off-putting to the no-nonsense, just-get-on-with-it reader. But as a true artist, Spackman writes essentially to please himself, or, more grandly, to realize his own vision. Born in 1905, this one-time professor of classics brought out his first novel, the rather conventional Heyday (1953), when he was nearly 50; An Armful Of Warm Girl was published a quarter-century later when he was past 70. Encouraged by ecstatic reviews, he produced his remaining books to comparable applause, and then died from cancer in 1990. Perhaps only an elderly man could write so vivaciously about the tingles and tangles of love, could evoke so achingly "the caress of transience." Besides the five known novels, this handsome paperback also includes two short stories and the hitherto unpublished As I Sauntered Out, One Mid-century Morning . . .

Sometimes books and authors are fatuously dismissed as mere coterie favorites, outside the mainstream of literature. In fact, masterpieces are always outside the mainstream. They go their own way. W.M. Spackman is hardly a writer to every taste — some women readers, in particular, may find him objectionable — but he possesses what every writer yearns for: an unmistakable voice that once heard is never forgotten. Nor should it be.



Power play . . . President Clinton and Vice President Gore laugh at a comment by Robert Reich but his playful charm and excitement about his role in Clinton's presidency didn't last long PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MITCHELL

Laboring in Vain for Ideology

David Brooks

LOCKED IN THE CABINET
By Robert Reich
Knopf. 338 pp. $25

YOU GET so you can see them coming a paragraph ahead. You're two-thirds of the way through Robert Reich's account of the first Clinton term, and so far you've endured about 600 short-guy jokes. At first they were funny — his fear of being passed through the X-ray machine at the airport. But the jokes come fast and furious, and by the time he describes how he got stuck trying to crawl through the dog door to his house . . . well, you just want to avert your eyes. A person who tells a few jokes about his own puniness is showing he's comfortable with it. Somebody who can't stop joking about it is only raising questions.

Locked In The Cabinet is unnerving. It's a story of deterioration, like a dinner party that starts as a witty Noel Coward comedy and ends up in Eugene O'Neill territory. The book is in diary form, and the first 140 pages, covering 1992 and 1993, are as funny and perceptive as any administration memoir can be. During these early years, Reich was accompanying his Rhodes Scholar pal Bill Clinton up the giddy path to the White House. He ran Clinton's economic transition team. From that perch, for example, he got to watch outgoing budget chief Richard Darman rhapsodize over his power phone. "Each one of these is connected to a power center," Darman beams. One button gets him the Speaker of the House, another the Treasury secretary, and another button — Reich describes Darman's spreading grin — gets him the big guy in the Oval Office.

"This is where the loop begins," Darman enthuses, "This is the loop. Right here. OMB. This is where all the centers of power meet up. It's power central."

Dick Morris had to suck toes to get that kind of thrill.

Reich is so excited about his new-found role (he is appointed Secretary of Labor), he's even playful when describing his rivals. Reich portrays the meetings of the Clinton economic team as an endlessly repeating farce, with each character intoning his preappointed mantra. Deficit hawks like Robert Rubin warn about the bond market. Politicos like George Stephanopolous warn about hurting swing states. Liberals like Reich call for more investment spending.

He also imagines a fantasy lunch with his arch-villain Alan Greenspan, which ends with him calling the Fed chairman a "robber baron pimp" and Greenspan calling him a "Bolshevik dwarf."

Reich's playful charm doesn't survive for long. The last 200 pages of the book, describing 1994-1997, are increasingly ironic and bitter, and Reich's persona uglifies. He's beginning to feel himself under assault from all asides. The administration deficit hawks kill his big-spending retraining schemes. Congressional chairmen — Democrat and Republican — bully him with their power maneuvers. The union bosses, who get rough treatment from Reich, scorn his neoliberal agenda. His old pal Bill Clinton abandons him ideologically while schmoozing him socially. Dick Morris breezes in and reveals the future face of Clintonism. And finally, he is missing his wife and sons more and more.

You can condemn Clinton for lacking core convictions. But Reich's more principled path has its ugly side too

His skin thickens while his perceptions dull. Reich is no longer bemused by the power scene, but reverts to a cartoonishly simple-minded view of Washington. The Treasury secretaries Lloyd Bentsen and Robert Rubin are portrayed as marionettes of the oil industry and Wall Street. Treasury officials inevitably have agendas that conflict with Labor secretaries. But if Reich had developed a more supple view of his infra-administration rivals, he probably could have gamed the system a little better. As for Republicans, Reich reveals his Harvard parochialism and describes them as some sort of malevolent bacteria.

At some points, Reich acts like a typical politician. Every encounter with a "regular American" seems to produce a vignette that utterly confirms his own world view. And in the Clintonesque manner, he can be thumpingly self-righteous about his own zeal for social justice. But unlike Clinton himself, Reich's righteousness is not leavened by an instinctive love of humanity. When Reich is out campaigning for Democrats in 1994 and 1996, he adopts a pose of aloof superiority that is hard to take.

And then comes the horror of Dick Morris. Morris blows into Reich's office one day oozing focus group zealotry. "You have a lot of ideas . . . . I want them so I can test them," he declares. (The quotes are from Reich's memory.)

Reich wants Clinton to campaign for re-election on the issue of middle-class anxiety, and address the widening income gap between rich and poor. Morris assures him that by the middle of 1996 the income gap issue will be long forgotten. Clinton should run on optimism and prosperity, Morris says.

In his epilogue, Reich concedes that Morris's political instincts were correct. Just before the election, Reich decides he will step down. The second-term agenda would not justify the damage his absence would do to his family life.

Clinton and Reich began the first term in the same place, hoping to usher in an era of neoliberal activism. But the zeitgeist was too strong. The deficit hawks dominated Washington, and the country was turning moderately conservative. Clinton adjusted to the zeitgeist and Reich did not. You can condemn Clinton for lacking core convictions. But Reich's more principled path has its ugly side too. Locked In The Cabinet is a reminder that intellectuals can love their ideas so much that they become contemptuous of those who don't think as they do. Reich wasn't locked in the cabinet. He was locked in his ideology.

Dynamic Brown stuns City

Alex Brummer, Mark Milner and Rebecca Smithers

THE UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, stunned the City and MPs last week when he unveiled the second radical shake-up of Britain's financial system in two weeks — stripping the Bank of England of its watchdog role and handing it to a new all-powerful regulator.

The body, based on the existing Securities and Investment Board (SIB), will have full statutory powers, up to 2,000 staff and an estimated $250 million-a-year budget to enforce its will and protect consumers.

The move is designed to restore public confidence in Britain's financial services industry, which has been undermined by a series of City scandals, including the collapse of Barings bank, the closure of BCCI and the Maxwell pensions débâcle.

The ambitious plan, disclosed to the Bank of England only 24 hours ahead of the Commons announcement on Tuesday last week, attracted immediate criticism, spearheaded by the former Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke.

Mr Brown has decided to move 470 banking supervision staff from the Bank of England to the SIB. The other main City regulators will also be merged into the new organisation. It will be headed by the deputy governor of the Bank and former CBI boss, Howard Davies.

The announcement, which comes two weeks after the Chancellor gave the Bank control of interest rates, provoked the first fierce exchanges in the Commons. Mr Clarke denounced the semi-independence granted to the Bank of England to set interest rates, criticised this month's Budget as unnecessary, and attacked Labour's swift signing up to the European Union social chapter along with its commitment to mirroring the Tories' own spending plans for the first two years.

"In rushing into these things, this Government is showing all the signs of inexperienced men and women being intoxicated with their new power," Mr Clarke said.

Behind the bitter exchanges lies Labour's determination to overturn the regulatory regime set up by the Conservatives in 1986 which has been battered by scandals. Mr Brown has lost no time in ensuring that the Bank is not distracted from its central task of price stability by contamination from day-to-day problems among banks.

Mr Brown is also determined to shift insurance regulation from the Department of Trade and Industry to the new regulator — and, ultimately, to the control of the Treasury. The troubled London insurance market Lloyd's will fall under the supervision of an external regulator for the first time in its 300-year history.

The speed with which Mr Brown has moved to reform financial regulation is breathtaking. That he has also resisted the Bank of England's preference for banking supervision remaining with Threadneedle Street is sensational.

It has long been evident, to everyone except perhaps the Bank, that its credibility as an institution has been undermined by regulatory failure. In 1984, the Bank was seriously embarrassed by the collapse of the Johnson Matthey Bank; in 1991 came the failure of the Bank of Credit & Commerce International, followed in 1995 by the implosion of Barings.

Britain will be the first of the Group of Seven countries to create a regulatory structure for the post-globalisation era. Other countries, most notably in Scandinavia, have tried it. But, unlike the City of London, they do not host the second-largest equity markets in the world, higher foreign exchange dealings than New York, the biggest futures markets in Europe, and most of the world's investment and commercial banks.

In many ways Labour is only doing what the Bank of International Settlements in Basel has been striving for on a global level: to bring banking, securities and insurance regulation together. The argument is that the barriers between different types of financial institution no longer exist.

The challenge facing Mr Davies is formidable. The United States system of regulation may be antique, with its fragmentation and turf wars between the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) and the banking regulators, but it has a different culture. The SIB's reaction to crisis is to commission a report: the US approach is to kick ass. It is worth remembering that in the Guinness affair it was the US financier Ivan Boesky who provided information to the SEC which was passed to the British authorities. Mr Boesky had served his period in prison before the Guinness defendants came to trial. Moreover the Department of Trade report on the affair remains secret to this day.

The regulatory culture in Britain is undeveloped: the quality of people has been mixed, disciplinary action has been too slow and too informal. Unless Mr Davies can change the mind-set, his new super regulatory machinery could rapidly gum up.

California dreaming

Larry Elliott on how the UK has been colonised by American thinking



TWENTY years ago, a British visitor to the United States would have noticed the difference straight away. The language, the movies and the music were the same, but America had a different feel. Strip developments, shopping malls, drive-through McDonald's, orbital freeways, towers of steel and glass all jarred with the dowdy Britain of the late 1970s.

But no longer. Britain in 1997 has been Americanised. Almost every provincial town has a greenfield development complete with multiplex cinema, tenpin bowling, a fast-food joint and acres of parking space.

This is just the outward show of a much deeper colonisation of the Western industrial world by American ideas, business mores and culture. It is hard to accept for some, particularly those on the left who grew up in the 1960s when America was the Great Satan.

Thirty years ago, Europe was credible as a third way between American imperialism and Soviet repression, but just as communism was vanquished in the 1980s, so the 1990s have seen the static European model pushed on to the defensive by US expansionism.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the anti-American left has high hopes that the new Government will "move closer to the heart of Europe" and reject Atlanticism.

But everything the Blair administration has done in its first, whirlwind weeks in office suggests that the links with the US will be as strong, if not stronger, than in the Thatcher-Reagan era. It is no surprise that Bill Clinton was due to address the Cabinet this week; after all, he has been like Banquo's ghost in Downing Street since May 1.

At last weekend's summit at Noordwijk in Holland, the Prime Minister made it clear that he would only support an employment chapter in the son of Maastricht treaty provided it encourages flexible labour markets. There had to be "less obsession with ourselves and our institutions, more focus on the things that matter to people".

This was entirely sensible. Labour is pragmatic, and will cherry-pick ideas from anywhere provided they work. As far as Labour is concerned, the US works when it comes to job creation, and Europe doesn't.

Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown are convinced that globalisation is here to stay, and that the challenge for policymakers is to ensure that their societies can compete. That means a macro-economic policy which encourages growth, balanced budgets, a better-educated workforce, a re-tooled welfare state and flexible labour markets. From the Whitehall perspective, Clinton seems to be doing a lot better than Jacques Chirac or Helmut Kohl.

Delving deeper into Labour's psyche, it is evident that its intellectual drive comes from the East Coast. Key advisers such as David Miliband and Ed Balls studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard, and are still plugged into US academia's fecund world. Almost every idea floated since the election — operational independence for the Bank of England, a beefed-up Securities and Investment Board, Welfare to Work, an elected mayor for London — has its origins on the other side of the Atlantic. It would be no surprise if Brown chose one of the top US Keynesians — Paul Krugman, Lester Thurow, Robert Frank, Robert Reich — to the Bank of England's monetary policy committee.

The signs are that Labour is drawing heavily on the puritanical side of the American dream. The central idea is to create an opportunity society, with individuals encouraged to be self-reliant and to live according to a set of established rules. There will be no room in Blair's Britain for the three-martini lunch, any more than there is in Clinton's America.

EVEN THE counter-culture against Americanisation is American-bred. The template for the direct-action environmental protests at Newbury and Manchester was the fight against loggers in the Pacific states at the start of the 1990s.

The logical conclusion of all this is that Britain should make a virtue of reality and become even more American. That, too, is the conclusion drawn by Charlie Leadbeater in an essay published this week by the Demos think-tank.

Leadbeater's argument is that Britain should become the California of Europe. He points out that the golden state, similar in size to the UK, has been more successful than any other Western economy in restructuring away from the old, declining industries and into computers, the Internet, biotechnology, multimedia entertainment and design. Quite simply, California is forging ahead in the knowledge-based industries of the future; in 1975, it accounted for 15 per cent of America's hi-tech jobs, last year that figure had increased to 22 per cent.

Could Britain follow the Californian route? Leadbeater argues it could. Both economies are at the western edge of large regional markets. Both have strengths in the "soft, knowledge-based industries which are likely to be the engines of growth in the next century". Britain shares with California a strain of individualism, flexibility and decentralised culture and, like the West Coast, has a tradition of free trade and an openness to immigrants and new ideas."

The downside of California is that the state's infrastructure is poor, the education system fails too many people and there is growing poverty among the underclass. These are real disadvantages. But Europe has its own underclass, and it is getting bigger. It is no longer the haven of social solidarity it once was, and has come up with only one answer for solving the problem — ever-stronger doses of deflation to prepare for the single currency. And anybody who thinks that is going to do the trick is, to use an imported American phrase, "off message".

Britain: The California of Europe? £2.95 from Demos; 9 Bridewell Place, London EC4V 6AP.

In Brief

BRITAIN charged into the world's economic top 10 during the last year of Conservative rule, according to a report by the World Economic Forum, and became the best-performing economy in Europe.

MARKS & SPENCER announced a record profit of $1.6 billion as the UK retail chain revealed that its next international incursion may be into the Latin American market.

FASHION designer Ralph Lauren and his family stand to make a $397 million when the Polo Ralph Lauren company goes public later this year.

STOREHOUSE became the latest UK retailer to announce expansion plans when it promised 1,000 new jobs in its Bhs stores. The plans form part of a $190 million development programme.

BOEING will have to abandon exclusive sales deals with airlines if the European Commission is to clear its merger with McDonnell Douglas, senior EU sources said.

VICTIMS of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International will be able to claim compensation from the $4.7 million confiscated from fraudster Abbas Gokal, a UK High Court judge decided.

THE AMERICAN insurance industry has vowed to fight any attempt to force its members to contribute towards a $350 billion settlement between cigarette companies and those suing them for damages.

BRITISH AIRWAYS finally cut its links with US Airways when it sold its remaining stake for $499 million, realising a $224 million profit.

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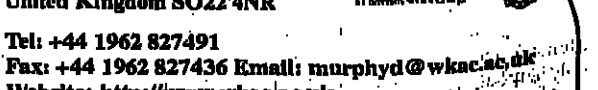
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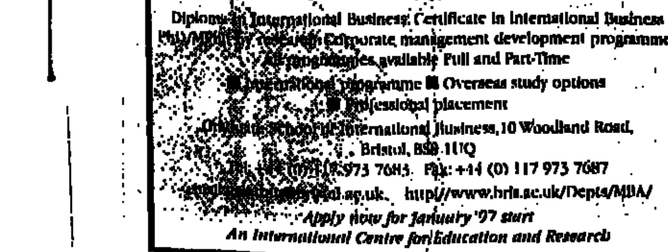
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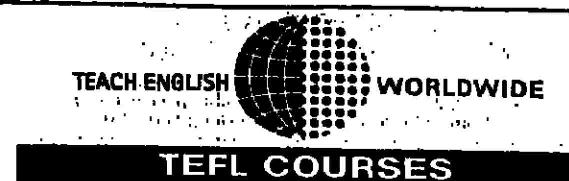
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He who would valiant be

OPINION
Charlotte Raven



Cold ambition . . . A mountaineer tackles Everest in winter

MY BOYFRIEND is up Mount Everest. He isn't attempting the summit — bless him, the man gets vertigo sitting on my balcony — but has gone for the gentler walk that takes you to Base Camp. This sounds a bit like Benidorm. There's a mess tent, electricity, piles of rubbish and quantities of holidaying Brits. These are the people on commercial expeditions who have paid through the nose for the privilege of trying not to die.

We talk to each other by satellite phone. I ask him what he's been up to, expecting tales of friendships forged and pacts of honour made in blizzards. He tells me he's been homesick and has rediscovered the Smiths. Such stories as there are of the mountain — and there really must be some, considering Ian is a journalist who went with the intention of exploring the Everest myth — will just have to wait until Friday. "Until then," we say at the end of our talk. I *know* he's coming home.

Meanwhile people are dying. Last month, the death toll reached five and anyone going for the summit has roughly a one in four chance of returning. I can only wonder what it must be like to be the wife or girlfriend of a man who would ruin the rest of your life by jeopardising his in pursuit of what? It's not as if he'd be the first. That kick I can understand, but how do you keep it special when there are queues of thrill-seekers cluttering the ascent?

Going to Everest now is like arriving at a Disneyland spectacle. The place has been torn out of context and the only thing it serves is the selfish gratification of the paying customer. In this sense, a conquest is no longer significant for anyone except the individual involved. In the old days, when climbers represented their countries, the flags they planted signified a triumph for all humanity. Everest, like space, was a metaphor for the nobility of human aspiration. Mountaineers and astronauts were heroes, for the simple reason that what they did was a far, far greater thing than the achievement of some "personal" goal.

"One small step for man . . ." The phrase is self-effacing. It emphasises Armstrong's role as an envoy of "mankind". Compare this with Jon Krakauer's account of last year's disastrous Everest attempt. He doesn't see himself as part of anything and even fails to find common cause with the others in his team. "Although in a few hours we would leave camp as a group, we would ascend as individuals, linked to one another neither by rope nor any deep sense of loyalty."

As to explaining why he did it, he says it was a "boyhood ambition". This, I think, is fair enough, but why does it translate into adulthood? There is something so literal-minded about the desire to prove your grown-up worth by going somewhere you shouldn't be and seeing if your body can stick it. This Krypton Factor version of personal growth thinks courage is the same as endurance. So a person who runs the London marathon is "brave", as is a woman who "beats" breast cancer. By this scale of reckoning, subjecting yourself to frostbite and all manner of other unpleasantnesses while risking death on a mountainside is *just about as brave as you can get*. You simply have to hope that your nose falls off or else you will not have been tested and your teammates will call you a wuss.

In these situations, survival is considered an achievement. Yet nobody says of the dead that they were lacking in the right stuff. We tend to think, quite properly, that they were victims of circumstance. So why do we give survivors so much credit for carrying on? It's not as if the rest of us are so little attached to life that we'd give it up more lightly.

When the yachtsman Tony Bullimore was rescued from his upturned boat, he was hailed a hero. Here was a man who, apart from being a crap sailor — he'd been rescued three times before — was arrogant enough to mythologise the "feat" of staying alive. He put his survival down to "sheer determination". It isn't clear to me how being rescued by someone else should qualify *you* for a medal. Of course, he *could* have given up within the first few hours — just as I *could* slash my wrists instead of completing this column. It cost the Australian navy and air force nearly US $5 million to save Bullimore from drowning. They will doubtless be pleased to hear he is returning to competitive sailing.

Men like Tony Bullimore aren't heroes. We mustn't mistake their doggedness for anything worthwhile. Lacking the imagination to see through all these infantile conceptions of bravery, they think living on the edge means not coming home for tea. It's the outward-bound equivalent of pumping yourself full of heroin — this desire to cut loose from real life in favour of some selfish, solipsistic pursuit. Quite apart from which, it is profoundly unattractive. I chose my boyfriend knowing he was not of the "because it's there" brigade. It may be the case that when he returns, he will ask me to watch him abseil down the side of London's Oxo tower. But somehow I don't think so.

CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE



Love match . . . multi-racial couples Frank and Laura Bruno (left), and Mandy Allwood and Paul Hudson reflect a growing British trend

Black, white and every shade between

Multi-racial Britain is slowly turning beige, writes **Gary Younge**

SEBASTIAN NAIDOO'S racial identity does not fit comfortably into a box. His father is South-African Indian. His mother is white and British. When he is presented with the kind of ethnic monitoring questionnaires that appear everywhere from council house applications to interview forms he often ticks "Indian". Sometimes he marks "other". Occasionally he just does not bother. The only consistent response he has to the questions is exasperation.

"Once I just scrawled 'human' over the whole lot. I wanted to make fun of their questions and show them how arbitrary their racial categories were," he says. "In a society where racial lines are very clearly drawn, if you acknowledge your complex identity you end up in this murky grey area which is rarely catered for on official forms."

Where Britain's non-white communities are concerned, Naidoo has both the face and frustration of the future. Darryl Slater, aged 32, has a similar face but a different outlook. He was born to a Jamaican father and a white, British mother. He says he is both black and mixed-race. "Some people have a problem with that and think I have to come down on one side or the other but I think I can contain those contradictions. As far as mainstream British society is concerned I am black, but sometimes it helps to make the distinction as to what kind of black that is.

"I don't think that to choose one identity is to reject the other part of your past. It doesn't mean I love my mother any less because I say I'm black and she's white. I still love her and she still loves me. I've just had a different racial experience from her."

A 10-minute walk down any main street in a British city or visit to any crèche, primary school or maternity ward would illustrate the extent to which the likes of Naidoo and Slater will see the wealth of their bi-racial heritage replicated and their experiences echoed for years to come.

Mixed-race people, who were once the rare offspring of the handful of people brave enough to ignore the entrenched prejudice of the early years, are now set to become the rule, rather than the exception, for the black experience in Britain. Put crudely, Black Britain is going beige.

A report released last week by the race relations think tank, the Policy Studies Institute, indicates that Britain's ethnic minorities are marrying across racial lines at a staggering rate. Half of British-born Caribbean men, a third of Caribbean women and a fifth of Indian and African Asian men have a white partner, the survey showed. Around 80 per cent of "Caribbean" children now have one white parent.

While it is difficult to establish precise numbers, David Owen, a senior research fellow at the Centre for Research for Ethnic Studies, believes the number of mixed-race children has grown by around 40 per cent during the eighties and has leapt even faster during the nineties. "Distinct cultural practices are giving way among the British-born to more culturally mixed lifestyles, but the young retain a strong sense of ethnic identity," according to the PSI report, Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage.

Even though precise statistics are sketchy, a profile of those who inherit these new culturally mixed lifestyles is beginning to emerge. As the products of relationships between whites and second generation black Britons, whose parents only arrived in large numbers during the fifties and sixties, those of mixed parentage are young. Figures from the last census suggest they have an average age of around 16. They are predominantly urban, since that is where most black Britons live, but less likely to live in an inner city than their non-white parents.

Yet despite their growing numbers there are few official records of their existence and scant acknowledgement of their presence in any debates focusing on issues of race and identity. Even the British vocabulary is struggling to keep up now that the terms "half-caste" and "coloured" are widely rejected as offensive. "Nobody is 'half' anything," says one mixed-race man — and labels like mixed-race, multi-racial and children of dual heritage and mixed parentage are vying for a place in the new multi-ethnic dictionary.

Like Tiger Woods, the young American golfer who recently described himself as "Cablinasian" — a mixture of Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian — they are now navigating their way to a new identity within the complex parameters of Britain's complex ethnocracy.

To some their presence heralds the dawning of a new post-racial era: the most potent symbol of an integrated society in which the need to refer to someone's race at all will one day become redundant. To others, particularly in the black community, they represent a threat to the future of their cultural heritage as Britain's ethnic minorities become increasingly submerged into white society, leaving future generations with little idea of the identities of their forebears. While growing numbers of black people might be involved with white partners, they point out, the numbers of white people who choose non-white partners remains tiny, at about 1 per cent.

In between are those who believe little has changed and that, regardless of their skin shade, mixed-race people should be considered as black; and a handful who argue that they now make up an entirely new racial group, as for example, do the Coloureds in South Africa or mulattos in parts of the Caribbean.

MANY OF these opposing views have been played out in the debate over whether a mixed-race category should be included in the next census for 2001. It has fuelled an intense row among politicians, academics and equal opportunities advisers. The 1991 census, the first to ask questions about ethnicity, had nine categories: white, black Caribbean, black African, black other, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and any other ethnic group.

The Commission for Racial Equality supports the change. "None of the categories that we have are adequate," says Chris Myant of the CRE. "There are people of mixed race who felt themselves forced to sign 'other' because they could not see themselves on the form."

Bernie Grant, Labour MP for Tottenham, objects, claiming that such a classification would give the illusion that such people make up a self-sufficient racial or ethnic group. "Society sees mixed-race people as black, and they are treated as black. They are never accepted as white, so they have no choice," he says.

Mixed-race people themselves are divided. Naidoo, aged 26, says he would put his cross next to "mixed-race", albeit with serious reservations. "It depends how it's used," he says. "I would hope that a mixed-race category would help to further acknowledge the growing human diversity in this country. But I fear it would just be an attempt to find a place for those people who do not already fit into the racial puzzle."

Chris James, whose mother is Spanish and father is from Grenada in the Caribbean, says she would continue to tick black other: "I don't think there is enough of a mixed-race community or identity for that category to be meaningful. It's important that you have access to the kind of cultural resources that will help you to cope with your life in Britain, and I don't know where mixed-race people would get that from on their own."

The debate may sound esoteric but in the United States, where a far more bitter and divisive debate has been raging for several years, one mother refused to register her child for school until she was allowed to tick a multi-racial category. On Ashleigh Miller's first day at school in Alabama the principal, who is black, insisted she was white while her mother, Loretta Edwards, who is white, said her daughter was multi-racial. Unable to locate a suitable shade of grey, she took the girl home.

"Ashleigh gets very upset when people call her white because she's not, she's multi-racial. For her it means choosing between her mother and father," says Edwards. She is suing the federal government in a bid to force it to include the category "multi-racial" on all state and federal forms. Her cause, backed by several congressmen, is attracting attention right up to the White House.

Most identities are not set in stone but are fluid and often rooted in individual circumstances. "A Welshman can feel Welsh in Britain, British in Europe and European in the Far East. People have lots of identities that come to the fore through lots of different experiences," says Professor Richard Berthoud, who led the PSI team. The term "mixed-race" is meaningless, he says, and is calling for two ethnic questions on the census, one asking the ethnicity of your parents and the other asking what the respondent would call him/herself. "The very idea that 'mixed-race' forms a homogeneous category is a nonsense. Someone who is born to black and white parents and someone who is born to Pakistani and white parents will not have anything in common at all. There is no one social group that calls itself mixed-race but several," he says.

THIS WAS a big problem with the US pilot surveys. "One of the largest percentages of people who filled out the multi-racial category were people who would not generally be considered multi-racial at all," says Ruth McKay, an US anthropologist who worked on the surveys. "They were people whose parents were of Irish and Italian origin or white American and French — they were mixing race and ethnicity," she says.

This has prompted some to call for an end to all racial categorisations on the grounds that they are unable to embrace the diversity that now exists and have therefore been rendered meaningless.

Yet, despite its obvious imperfections, racial monitoring was introduced to provide a crude yardstick to show what was happening within Britain's various ethnic groups. It is how we know that Caribbean girls are doing brilliantly at school and white working-class boys are failing badly. Without it this article could not be written because there would be no way of knowing how many mixed-race relationships there are. "We are sensitive to the idea that people should be able to express their racial heritage. But we wonder whether this is the most appropriate forum in which to do it," says a spokesman for the US's largest civil rights organisation, the NAACP.

After years of being officially invisible and socially ignored by members of both racial groups, others are simply pleased that the issue is finally being aired seriously. "It is becoming complex as more and more mixing goes on," says James, whose partner recently had a baby. "By the time my child is my age things could be very different and I would hate to deny them the choice."

Britain's ethnic mix



Clare Short, the first UK aid minister inside the Cabinet for 18 years, offers no easy answers, says **Ian Black**

Short shrift from Lady Bountiful

NO ONE can accuse Clare Short of not speaking bluntly about what lies ahead for Britain's overseas aid programme: in her first public remarks as secretary of state for international development last month, she declared: "I won't play Lady Bountiful." Against a background of great expectations from a more internationalist Labour government and ringing declarations about putting ethics and human rights at the centre of foreign policy, her instinct was to make clear that cash for the world's poorest is not going to be in abundant supply.

Labour has pledged carefully to "start to reverse the decline in the aid budget" — currently an embarrassing 0.26 per cent of GNP compared with the 0.52 per cent when the party was last in power, while UN targets call on the rich to spend 0.7 per cent. And no new money is expected for another three years.

Yet many believe that the advent of the first cabinet minister to hold the job for 18 years, and a feisty, strategic-minded one at that, could mean a new focus for Britain's attempts to tackle global misery. Short has made clear she sees the position as being about "not just dollops of charity as the world crumbles into



Clare Short: her feisty approach could change British aid policy

chaos, but about real development and eliminating abject poverty".

She is modestly dismissive about her official car and red boxes, but her position does matter: the Department for International Development (DFID) aims to be a bigger hitter on the Whitehall scene than the Overseas Development Administration, a wing of the Foreign Office run by a junior minister since 1979. If it isn't, then the vision thing won't happen.

So as the DFID begins work on its first white paper since 1975, charities see a golden opportunity for drawing up a new strategy that not only reflects globalisation and its punishing effect on the most vulnerable, but also pushes the subject higher up the political agenda.

Statistics provide a numbing reminder of the scale of the task: aid from the most developed countries is at its lowest level for 20 years; assistance to the neediest has decreased by 7 per cent since 1990. European Union aid to strategically important eastern Europe and North Africa is now equal to all EU aid going to sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific combined. The poorest countries and poorest people are increasingly marginalised from the world economy.

Post-cold war instability, with most wars now within rather than between countries, has diverted more resources into emergency aid while precious little is getting to basic health, education, water and sanitation.

"Emergency aid is sticking plaster for a broken limb," Short snapped after last November's Budget delivered another in a succession of swingeing cuts. "Aid should be aimed at preventing it from breaking in the first place." So poverty reduction, says the DIFD, will remain at the centre of Britain's development co-operation. But its job is not just about aid: sustainable development will help alleviate other problems caused by or exacerbated by poverty — conflict, migration, environmental degradation and population growth.

Short is nothing if not ambitious, but it will take time before it becomes clear how far she can go in building the long-term integrated approach she wants by bringing debt, trade, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the environment, as well as human rights and aid, under her scrutiny.

Empire-building could come up against resistance from the Foreign Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, and Environment, while the Treasury is unlikely to relinquish debt management or relations with the World Bank. Much depends on her relations with Chancellor Gordon Brown and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook.

Coherence is the key word in all this: what is the point, for example, in giving aid to West African farmers if their livelihoods are being destroyed by European goods subsidised by the Common Agricultural Policy? Oxfam, one of many non-governmental organisations to have submitted ideas for the white paper, is calling on the Government to address ethical standards for transnational corporations and end the dumping of unwanted food that undermines Third World planning.

Specific demands include an end to the aid and trade provision that brought the notorious Pergau dam scandal when aid to Malaysia became "entangled" in an arms deal.

Many practical tests lie ahead: Robin Cook has already won plaudits for calling for an ethical foreign policy and accelerating the landmines' ban. But how far will Britain actually go in pushing for an EU-wide code on the arms trade, or for more generous debt relief when the G7 meets in Denver later this month?

New Labour brooms have come and gone in the past. Clare Short is making all the right noises, but these are early days: "We are generally enthusiastic because this department is going to have more visibility and it will provide a new global vision," says Simon Maxwell, of the Institute for Development Studies. "But the trick will be to see how things are done differently."



Netting prawns on a Bangladesh salt lake, which was once virgin mangrove forest PHOTOGRAPH: JIM HAMES

King prawn rules in a poison sea

Europe's insatiable taste for farmed seafood destroys livelihoods, writes **Suzanne Goldenberg** in Keyakhali, Bangladesh

THEY SAW the enforcers coming from a distance — 50 men cycling along the embankment, iron bars and home-made petrol bombs glinting under a bright afternoon sky.

As the villagers cowered in their homes, the intruders hacked at the dam, laughing as the brackish waters bubbled over the pitiful strands of rice paddy that had managed to sprout from the cracked earth.

"They were so ferocious. We didn't dare to confront them," says Qarimulislam Biswas, strolling under a black parasol towards the spot where the waters washed over the land. Though the villagers managed to drive back the saline flood, Biswas doubts that anything will now grow on his seven acres, which are smeared with white salt deposits. "I feel sick at heart," he says.

Victory belongs, once again, to the prawn lord, a local businessman who coveted these fields for aquaculture. The villagers, who had fretted for three years while their lands lay under a salty swamp, reclaimed them last year, hoping to revert to traditional jute and paddy crops. In villages such as Keyakhali, in coastal southwestern Bangladesh, such struggles have become commonplace. The villagers, no match for well-connected townsfolk who grab land through stealth or outright coercion, generally lose out.

Within just over a decade, 350,000 acres of coastal lands in Khulna district, as well as near the southeastern town of Cox's Bazaar, have been turned into prawn farms, devastating rich mangrove forests that had been designated national treasures. Much of Khulna now resembles a vast saline lake, where local hooligans on speedboats and in bamboo watchtowers stand guard over the crustaceans.

For the well-connected, the area has become an aquatic Klondike — in Bangladesh, as in the rest of Asia, putting prawns on European restaurant tables is big business. Asia now accounts for 80 per cent of the $9 billion prawn trade.

The biggest fortunes have been made raising tiger prawns, which are exported to Japan, Europe and North America. But local peasants have not shared in this wealth.

"You cannot suddenly stop the whole thing, but the people in Europe's big restaurants should be conscious of what they are eating," says Khushi Kabir, a Bangladeshi activist. "They should ask themselves what benefits the labourers are getting."

It was in the name of local peasants that the World Bank and international donor agencies first made massive investments in Asia's "blue revolution". Aquaculture — especially commercial farming of high-value luxury foods such as tiger prawn — was supposed to give poor rice farmers in Bangladesh and other Asian countries an alternative source of income.

In Bangladesh, seafood became the third-largest earner of foreign exchange. But few people in Khulna have even tasted tiger prawn — which sell for 400 takas (about $10) a kilo — as the land has been turned into saline desert, unfit even for grazing cattle.

"It added to our national income but it added very little to the local index," admits Atul Sarkar, the representative in Khulna of the Catholic agency Caritas, which at first supported prawn cultivation.

The sacrifices of local people were for gains that were never meant to last. "It's a shifting cultivation. It destroys the environment, then it moves somewhere else," said Atiur Rahman, an economist at the Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies. "After five years, neither shrimp nor paddy can be produced in that area. Then you have had it."

Bangladesh is already beginning to see diminishing returns, in part because prawn farming has been particularly unscientific and unplanned. There are no hatcheries for shrimp; instead women flush the shrimp fry out of forest streams, depleting other species in the process.



The harvested prawns are heaped casually on blocks of ice in wicker baskets in tiny workshops in the Khulna bazaar for grading. Last month the European Union became so concerned at hygiene standards in local packing plants that it threatened to halt food imports from Bangladesh. Even those local farmers who were once enthusiastic about prawn have grown disillusioned. "I thought that we could make more money growing shrimp than rice or jute," says Jahaboksha Biswas, a former headmaster.

"But now we understand fully that the salt water is absolute poison. It can produce only shrimp and damages everything else around it." He points to a grove of spindly palms at the edge of the former shrimp farm. "Even the coconut water tastes of salt now."

SUCH disillusion has found institutional expression. The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, once enthusiastic supporters, are now distancing themselves from aquaculture and the government is reviewing its policy of granting easy credit to prawn entrepreneurs.

Environmentalists describe prawn farming in Asia as "rape and run" industry. "I haven't seen anything so devastating," says Vandana Shiva, a leading Indian environmental campaigner. "I have spent 20 years of my life in environmental work and fought horrible disasters, and there is nothing so devastating of such rich ecosystems and of systems that lend themselves to sustainable use."

Prawn farming had been unstoppable — until nature took its revenge with a disease that wiped out prawn enterprises in Taiwan in 1987 and in India in 1994. The white spot virus, thought to result from bad farm management, infects young prawn. It devastated areas of Bangladesh last year and is menacing this year's harvest, which is under way.

"You watch the shrimp coming to the surface and you feel very bad because you know the business is over," says Sheikh Mohammed Moazzam Rashidi Doaza, one of the bigger farmers in Khulna. "As soon as it stops being profitable then I will leave."

Rameses' sons see the light

Tim Radford

SCIENTISTS are to carry out DNA tests on four skeletons discovered last month in the Valley of the Kings, in Egypt, which they believe could be sons of the Pharaoh Rameses II, buried 3,200 years ago.

The discovery, revealed for the first time, holds the tantalising possibility of a link with the biblical Book of Exodus. Although there is no hard evidence, generations of historians have identified the Pharaoh who enslaved the people of Israel as Rameses. The Pharaoh released Moses and the Israelites only after 10 terrible plagues, believed to have been sent by God.

In the tenth, according to Exodus, on the night of the first passover, God took the lives of all the first-born sons of Egypt.

"Amon-Her-Khopeshef, the oldest son of Rameses II, is buried in our tomb," the discoverer, Kent Weeks of the American University in Cairo, said in London. There was evidence of his identity on the walls of the tomb, and on canopic jars traditionally used to hold the entrails of the embalmed. "One wonders if these skeletons belong to four of the sons of Rameses II."

The bodies were discovered in another dramatic twist in one of the most astonishing stories in Egyptology: the discovery, in 1995, of evidence of a huge tomb apparently dedicated to the sons of Rameses in what had once been written off as a "dirty, unimportant hole" in the ground.

Professor Weeks — who has been working for 17 years to map the tombs and monuments of ancient Thebes and the Valley of the Kings — only began looking for the almost-forgotten tomb known as KV5 as a precaution, because the Egyptian antiquities department planned to widen a tourist road into the ancient necropolis, near the modern city of Luxor.

Rameses II, the Pharaoh who declared himself a god

He began in 1988, scraping away tourist litter and rubble piled by Howard Carter when he opened the tomb of Tutankhamun seven decades ago. In 1995 Professor Weeks and his Egyptian colleagues stunned the world when they announced that the unimportant hole in the ground contained 67 chambers and a number of hieroglyphic references to the children of Rameses. The tomb — if it was a tomb — had been comprehensively robbed, and then lay undisturbed for 3,000 years.

Professor Weeks revealed that by April he had discovered 118 rooms. KV5 is a labyrinth of corridors off a 16-pillared hall, and exists on five different levels. Progress has been painstaking, and each new section of the complex and enormous tomb has been a surprise. Only five rooms have been cleared.

"Since there are corridors here, and not just rooms, and since there is evidence of other corridors, the likelihood of there being still more chambers in this tomb is great. We have 118 at the moment, and can guarantee you that when we return to work in September we will reach at least 150.

"We found nicely decorated walls, again with scenes showing Rameses and one or other of his children, being presented in the afterlife. We have found close to two dozen representations of Pharaoh and his sons."

They also found human remains: the bones of four young adult males in their late 20s. One had been struck on the head with a sword or an axe. The way they were found suggested their mummified bodies had been dragged more than 3,000 years ago by tomb robbers to the entrance — where the light was better — to be stripped of gold, jewellery and amulets.

Letter from Bamako Robert Lacville

White and wrong

NANA was not quite born in my household. She was born about a year before her parents came to look after the garden and the washing, and she was brought up with our daughter Lala. They learned to walk together, and danced to the tam-tam at weekends. They went to nursery school together, which helps explain why Nana is top of her class in French, and 4th out of 109 over all.

I was admiring Nana's school report by the light of a solar lamp, when I noticed her chin. There seemed to be an orange blemish. "What is that?" I asked. Looking coy, Nana told me it was a teenage spot. I looked again, this time with my glasses on. Yes, I could see the mild acne on her chin. I well remember the embarrassment of adolescence. But this orange tinge had nothing to do with acne. "What cream do you use?" A tell-tale hesitation then, "Cream to treat my spots." I told Nana to fetch it. As I waited, I remembered an earlier occasion when I had caught Nana unawares with cream all over her face. She had told me then that she was treating her spots, and I had reminded her that skin-lightening cream is bad for the skin. No, it was only for her spots, she assured me.

Nana returned, and handed me a substantial plastic bottle printed with blue writing. "Eau claire" was the name of the cream. I already knew what I needed to know, but I read on to the end. The description in English and French suggests that it was probably made in Nigeria: the manufacturer has wisely omitted his name, to escape the wrath of parents who find this poison concealed in their daughters' cupboard. "Depigmentation cream" read the text: "Leaves your skin a lighter natural colour."

My mind flew to those living corpses who haunt the sidewalks of Africa's saddest cities, their facial skin destroyed by depigmentation creams. Gaunt grey creatures, some are condemned to stay indoors by day, for their skin can no longer tolerate the sunshine. My white skin suffers but it is nothing to the self-inflicted misery of the cream-corpses. The word *tcha-tcho* to describe skin-lighteners, comes from coastal Abidjan where the fashion first took hold after independence. In Bamako today it is a term of mockery or abuse. I looked at Nana's copper skin and shuddered at what she might do to herself.

I crossed the yard to the shower with its long-drop latrine, calling for Nana's mother and sister to follow. And the brothers too, why not? With the whole family crowded nervously into the doorway of the latrine, I unscrewed the plastic bottle, held it out at shoulder height, and squeezed the contents slowly into the hole. Its yellow pallor looked as sickly as the skin of an old *tcha-tcho*.

Then I turned to Nana. "You promised me that you were not using, and would not be using, any skin-lightening cream. It is disgusting stuff. It will destroy your beauty and your skin. I forbid you to use it ever again. I will not have a daughter of my house become a *tcha-tcho*! If I ever see you using such lightening cream, you will leave my house." The leaden silence suggested that the whole family was listening. Even the bats were silent.

I TURNED to Nana's mother. Did Awa buy the cream? She is one of the most agreeable women I have ever met and an excellent cook. But after 17 years, I know that she is not always very wise about child discipline. Who, if not Awa, would have paid for Nana's cream? Since she cannot read, did she know what was in the bottle? Or again, Nana might have got it from that young Liberian who is always hanging around the gate when it is Nana's turn to wash the clothes . . .

"Awa, tomorrow you will go to the market and buy some *karité* cream made from the shea nut. This is the best oil that exists for the skin. The women use it in Europe, as well as in Mali. You can buy a tube of Karitea cream, because this is the modern version and so Nana will prefer it. This is the only cream you will allow her to use."

Awa took the money, and nodded. Parental honour was saved. I pray that Nana's skin has been saved too.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***HAPLOGRAPHY* is described as "the inadvertent writing once of what should have been written twice". Is it the most useless word in the English language?**

THE QUESTION brings to mind the infamous case of Smith and Jones and their examination: "Smith, where Jones had had 'had' had had 'had had'. 'Had had' had had the examiners' approval." Presumably, had Jones known of haplography as a recognised disorder, he would have found the word most useful as a basis of appeal. — *Stephen Marriage, London*

***WHICH* has been the most peaceful, and which the most violent, place to live in this century?**

THE MOST peaceful would be Switzerland, which was non-aligned during both the first and second world wars. The most violent has been Cambodia, where under the Pol Pot regime, he and his henchmen murdered more than one million people. — *Harish and Chandni Shah, Harringay, London*

THE MOST peaceful inhabited territory has been Antarctica especially since the Antarctic treaty of 1961 which suspended all national territorial claims and commercial exploitation in favour of geophysical research. — *Tom Hennell, Withington, Manchester*

***HOW* can I estimate, in megabytes, the amount of memory in my brain?**

THE CONVERSION of information into binary digits is a gross simplification of the processes in the brain. A single, static well-resolved picture on a video display screen might need 1.5 megabytes in a machine's memory. How many scenes do we remember throughout our lifetimes? And what about language, literature, mathematics, science, music, to say nothing of neuro-muscular co-ordination? Machines are mere extensions of brains, devised to perform set programmes quickly. Garry Kasparov is no more inferior to a chess machine than is a bicyclist to a fast car. — *Michael Dearden, Carnforth, Lancashire*

***IT WOULD* appear that pure Ecstasy and Prozac exert their effect on the serotonin receptor sites in the brain. Why is the former illegal and the latter legal?**

IT IS the English way to be Prozaic but never Ecstatic. — *Dr Barbara Jones, Devonshire, Bermuda*

***WHY DO* people tend to look to the left or right, up or down, when attempting to recall some thing or event?**

IN THE late eighties there was an interest in a communication theory/therapy called Neuro-Linguistic Programming. One of the most interesting aspects of NLP was the work on "accessing cues" or bodily representations of cerebral processes. Regarding eye movements, NLP advocates that if you ask someone to remember a real event, their eyes will move to the left. Ask them to construct an imaginary event and their eyes will move to their right. If the event is visual their eyes are raised. If the event is kinesthetic (feelings, sight, taste) the eyes are lowered. If the event is auditory the eyes remain on the horizontal. — *Mike Graham, Carlisle*

***I HAVE* heard that in Britain there is no documented case of any Afro-Caribbean girl suffering from anorexia nervosa. Is this true?**

I KNOW that some Afro-Caribbean women and girls suffer because a few have been my patients. What makes these women exceptional is not that they have an eating disorder, but that they are prepared to tell a psychiatrist about it. People from black communities can have an understandable reluctance to entrust themselves and their distress to members of my profession who are often male and usually white. On top of this, they are not always understanding. — *Dr Jill Welbourne, Bristol Royal Infirmary*

Any answers?

WILLIAM* of Orange had his own Master of the Stool, a courtier whose job it was to wipe the King's bottom. When did members of the British monarchy become intelligent and dextrous enough to clean their own backsides? —*Carl Gardner, London

WHAT* does humble pie consist of, and who baked the first one? — *Les Bright, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Romania makes drama out of crisis

Lyn Gardner visits the broke but brilliant National Theatre of Craiova and finds hope amid gloom

ON THE main road west out of Bucharest, crumbling blocks of flats soon give way to fields. For mile after mile across the great expanse, as flat as a table-top, you see tiny figures tending the land with horse and plough.

The road signs promise McDonald's, but if you want to eat properly in Romania, the first requirement is a family in the country. Last Christmas, rehearsals for the National Theatre of Craiova's Hamlet were regularly disrupted as production staff disappeared to the country to help slaughter the family pig. Food before art.

Craiova is a town of around half a million people about 300km from Bucharest. It seems sunk in eternal gloom. Even the flowers for sale in the streets are dyed in garish hues, as if nature alone were insufficient to raise the spirits. Eight thousand people died here during an earthquake in the mid-seventies. Their memorial is acre after acre of eastern European concrete.

"Craiova is an armpit of a place," says Neil Wallace, a former director of Glasgow's Tramway who now runs a production company called Offshore International Cultural Projects. Wallace has been coming to Craiova from his base in Amsterdam since the early nineties, drawn by the company's performances at the Edinburgh Festival and reports that its leading director, Silvu Purcarete, was doing even more astonishing work in his homeland. It is Wallace who has put Craiova on the international theatre map.

Like Romania itself, this institution has a long history and an uncertain future. The present theatre is a seventies concrete structure, but it has existed in one version or another since 1850. In the office of the theatre's indefatigable director, Emil Boroghina, one of only two theatre managers to survive the toppling of Ceausescu, the mock-Louis XV furniture is barely visible under teetering towers of unfiled documents dating back years.

A ghost stalks the backstage corridors: Purcarete's. He may not be dead, but he left the country long ago, like so many of Romania's best and brightest. "There are no soft landings for a theatre that has played host to genius and now has to stand back and watch as genius moves on to other things," observes Wallace.

The fear for the National Theatre of Craiova is that the best is behind it. Tokyo, Melbourne, Montreal, Amsterdam and Munich have all stood and cheered the child's waking nightmare that is Purcarete's glittering, menacing vision of Titus Andronicus.



Clean sweep: the 'naked axemen in a bath' scene from Titus Andronicus PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN HUDSON

Britain finally got the Titus experience last week. But the company's delight was tinged with desperation. The countries it hasn't played are getting fewer. And the productions people might want to see abroad are running out. Soon there will be no more foreign trips unless Boroghina can find the next Purcarete. He shrugs: "The talent is not there."

In Ceausescu's Romania, theatre provided an opposition. Some say it is now a theatre in search of an enemy. Audiences drifted away, more interested in what was going on on the streets than in what was happening on the stage. They are slowly returning, but there is almost no new writing.

At least Craiova has the Wallace connection. Next year, Purcarete will return to remount his Oresteia, first produced at the Centre Dramatique National in Limoges, where he is now artistic director. The Romanian company will then tour it abroad bringing much-needed fees to fund future productions in Craiova. Those who go abroad get a generous allowance and respite from daily life in Romania.

For now, though, the focus is on Titus, and on Pinocchio In Venice at the Cambridge Arts Theatre. Edward Carey's adaptation of Robert Coover's novel takes Collodi's puppet-turned-boy to Venice, where, in his dotage, he is plagued by memories and finds himself turning back into wood. Carey's script has been translated into Romanian, and he and the director, Robert Delamere, have been working on it with the Titus company, which brings the play to Britain and performs with English surtitles.

THERE is something wonderfully Alice In Wonderland about the whole enterprise, but the process has been fraught with difficulty. Carey and Delamere found dealing with the theatre's bureaucracy hard enough, but they were completely taken aback by the actors' attitude. "The whole country seems to be suffering from clinical depression," says Delamere. "You see it here in this company, in the oppression of the imagination. People don't want to take responsibility — they want to be told what to do."

Or possibly they simply don't take to a work "about someone who can't achieve his life because he is held back by his history," as Delamere puts it. One of the Romanian actresses gently suggests: "You English have a different point of view on sadness. You find it interesting; we are worn out by it."

At that evening's performance, it is difficult to tell whether the audience have genuinely enjoyed themselves or whether they are just being polite.

The following night at Titus Andronicus, the atmosphere is quite different. Children are out in force. There is almost a party atmosphere. It is a production that people come to see again and again. When I tell the concierge at my hotel that I'm going to see Titus, she spreads her hands, smiles and says: "The best."

And it is — full of pity and terror, bathing the stage in blood-red smoke and leaving you feeling that you have walked in the shadow of evil. You keep thinking of Conrad: "The horror. The horror." It is utterly mesmerising, and you want it to stop, and it doesn't.

Purcarete has resisted all attempts to link the production with the fall of the Ceausescu regime. But then, Ceausescu didn't have a monopoly on tyranny. That is why the play works across the globe.

The next morning I drive back to Bucharest with Ozana Oancea, who plays Lavinia in Titus. As we pass the fields on the road to Bucharest, she says: "We were sleepwalking in 1989. We were unconscious of what would happen after." The agony of Purcarete's Titus is that things don't always get better. Sometimes they just get worse.

Artistic supremo to quit Royal Court

Simon Hattenstone

STEPHEN DALDRY, artistic director of the Royal Court, has announced that he plans to leave the theatre when his contract expires next year.

Although he is remaining to see it into its revamped building in Sloane Square, central London, next autumn, he will take no responsibility for programming from then on. His successor is expected to be announced within three months.

Daldry insisted he was not resigning. "My contract finishes next September and I'd always thought I wouldn't renew beyond then."

His departure after what will have been six and a half years, comes as a shock because he enjoyed great success, re-establishing the Court as a hotbed of new talent for the first time since the kitchen-sink glory days of the fifties, when the English Stage Company was founded.

Daldry, aged 36, promoted the controversial and the literary — notably Sarah Kane's Blasted, Ayub Khan-Din's East Is East and Jez Butterworth's Mojo.

He has also helped pave the way for a new financial stability. Last year the Court won £15 million in lottery money, and Daldry was behind much fund-raising.

Among those being touted as a likely successor are Daldry's deputy, James Macdonald, Ian Rickson who was responsible for Mojo, one of the theatre's biggest recent hits and Dominic Dromgoole, who heads the new writing initiative at Peter Hall's Old Vic.

Max Stafford-Clark, Daldry's predecessor, said: "Stephen has triumphed in keeping the door open so that writers can come in from the street, and finding the great plays of a period, which are going to be the tidemark of our times."

One theory about Daldry's decision to leave is that he has lost confidence in his own directing ability — the Editing Process, the last new play he directed on the main stage, was one of the Court's few failures.

Daldry says it is a pragmatic decision. He told the Guardian: "It felt right to leave when we had a new theatre for a number of reasons. If I was going to stay on I needed to make a commitment for another three years, the logic being that if you leave within six months, the building goes into limbo. It's better to have that limbo out of the way."

Triumph for debutants at Glyndebourne

OPERA
Andrew Clements

PUCCINI for the first night would have been unthinkable at Glyndebourne a decade ago, but times change even down in Sussex, and last week it was Manon Lescaut, in a new staging by Graham Vick, that opened the season.

Manon is the prototype for the gallery of Puccini's hapless heroines which stretches through his career right up to his final stage work Turandot; women more sinned against than sinning. Like the Lulu in Vick's production in the same house a year ago, this Manon (sung by the Romanian Adina Nitescu) lives on stage much more through the men who manipulate her than through her own feelings or desires. She's weak-willed and vacuously acquisitive, but not a fully functioning, communicative human being. She doesn't deserve much sympathy.

Vick's treatment of the whole opera is economical and just fractionally detached. Whether he likes the characters isn't the point; he minutely observes their behaviour but doesn't take sides, leaving the music to do that. Anyone who has seen his Glyndebourne Yevgeny Onegin would recognise the family resemblances here: the spacious elegance of the sets in muted yellows, with just enough of their geometry out of kilter to tease the audience's imagination, and the exquisitely marshalled platoons of extras, local colour applied with the tip of a brush than rather in broad strokes.

Yet humour is threaded through the action — Manon's Parisian retinue is a wonderful parade of high camp, and as events spiral towards her arrest the action moves with the deftness of a French farce. It is faultlessly plotted.

Nitescu's performance in the title role is adequate rather than outstanding; but her voice has more interest in the lower register than at the top. The Des Grieux is another Glyndebourne debutant, Patrick Denniston, not a loud tenor, but one who fits well into this house and phrases cleanly and intelligently; Roberto de Candia is the robust Lescaut, Paolo Montasarlo the foppish Geronte.

There's a debutant in the pit too. It is John Eliot Gardiner's first appearance at Glyndebourne; Puccini may be unexpected territory for him, but the results are electrifying. He launched the prelude as if intending to get through all four acts before the dinner interval. While he allowed his singers all the expressive space they needed, no opportunity to ratchet up the dramatic tension was overlooked. The end of the second act was thrillingly direct, the extended love-death of the last paced perfectly; like everything else in the production the playing of the London Philharmonic was polished to a high shine.

Sharpe eye on victory

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

IT IS not widely known that *Sharpe*, a coom oop from t'ranks colonel, won the battle of Waterloo. But so it was. Wellington himself said so after Sharpe broke Napoleon's invincible Imperial Guard. Galloping up on his charger, Wonderful Wonderful Copenhagen, Wellington cried, "I'm beholden to you, Sharpe! You've beaten the Old Guard! Forward and complete your victory!"

Your victory, you notice.

Having run out of war, Sharpe ended with Waterloo. It has never been less than a generous, spacious, powerful series, with a hero to die for. Sean Bean gave the story sinew. But I am afraid that, magnificent though it is, Sharpe's Waterloo will not sell to Holland. There is the little matter of the Prince of Orange. Apparently, if you see a cavalry charge coming, it is a good idea to form a square, but the Prince of Orange, as feather-headed as the exploding poultry on his hat, quite failed to get the hang of it.

This drove Sharpe to explosions of rage, which were luckily almost incomprehensible. "Booger 'im! Pox-arsed, blue-blooded twat! Nowt but a silk stocking full of shit!" I still think it was injudicious of him to shoot the prince. An ally is an ally. As Churchill said, if Hitler invaded Hell, he (Churchill) would find something polite to say about the Devil.

The Chair (BBC 2), a trust-me-I'm-a-psychologist series of interviews, has appeared unexpectedly in the schedules.

Peter Mandelson, who complained to John Birt that the BBC had exploited him by raising this two-year-old programme from the dead, is the third subject in the series. Vanessa Feltz, the chat-show host, was the first.

To say she was articulate is like calling Niagara damp. She was fluent, she flowed without pause for breath. She seemed to have extraordinary resources of oxygen, like a seal. And the same flowing figure and the same round, calm eyes.

"I thought my father was the most handsome, the most thrilling, the most devastatingly gloriously gorgeously fantastic person in the whole world. He'd come home at three o'clock in the morning with a tortoise and call it Vasco da Gama."

Of *course* he did, dear. I imagine he bought it from a man in a pub.

Oliver James, the psychologist who interviewed her, was as stumbling as she was smooth. "Do you think, then, that the eating, perhaps, has had to do with trying to keep neg . . . er . . . negative, you know, becoming quite negative about yourself and feeling depressive, at bay?" Vanessa gave him the round, calm eyes treatment.

Her mother died in October 1995 and she made the programme six weeks later. She was in that state of cheerful anaesthesia that often treads closely on the heels of death. Mandelson, also, was reduced to tears discussing his father's death.

If Mandelson is annoyed, Vanessa Feltz is appalled. She was told it would be a 10-minute interview, transmitted late at night and almost immediately. That was 18 months ago. Moods and views can change markedly in that time.

There is quite a lot about this scheduling that seems shifty to me. Let's say, if I were offered The Chair by a man in a pub, I wouldn't buy it.

The new masters

ART
Rachel Barnes

WHEN Picasso saw his work hung at the Louvre in 1946, he was on tenterhooks. How would he measure up against the Old Masters? Gradually he overcame his rare attack of nerves. "It's the same thing! It's the same thing!" he exclaimed to the Louvre's director.

The past is a different country, it's said: they do things differently there. But is it? And did they? Walk from the 13th to the 20th centuries in the National Gallery, and you'll see artistic styles and historical circumstances change beyond measure. But human nature and human passions? Twentieth-century art is a continuation of the great art of the past, as well as a deliberate rebellion. Clearly this has been the experience of the students from eight art colleges who have been working with the National Gallery over several years. During their foundation year they were asked to select a painting and to create a work of their own in response.

The resulting paintings, sculptures, prints, installations and videos form the gallery's Back To The Future show (until June 22). This is the first time it has welcomed such outrageously postmodernist media as video and installation art.

"When we were told we were going to the National Gallery, I wasn't so keen," says Tamara Tyrer, who has made a video installation. "But each time we looked at the paintings, they became less remote."

As the works are by students in the process of finding their direction, they are experimental. But the standard is high, and there are one or two real stunners, where something completely original has been born out of the transcription.

The gallery's curators are not all inspired by the project, led by education officer Colin Wiggins. But the director, Neil MacGregor, is an enthusiast. When the National Gallery was set up in 1824, one of the aims was to encourage students to study the great artists of the past. "Back To The Future is completely in keeping with the original tenets of the gallery," she says.

Even a casual visitor can see the fun the students had in making their transcriptions. In a number of instances, they have reworked an old master in a modern idiom. Tyrer based her video installation Intimate Traces on Bonnard's nude L'Indolente. "I wanted it to be about the sense of loss and separation women feel," she says. "This was partly a reaction to the nudes in the gallery being painted by men."



She died smiling . . . gravity proves stronger than density in Abigail Riddihough's take on Degas's Miss La La At The Cirque

Joanna Garrett, from Wimbledon School of Art, made a carefully worked and thought-provoking update of Velazquez's Waterseller Of Seville, retitled The Big Issue Seller. Other students are more flippant. A photographic piece by Anne Storie turns the Rokeby Venus into a cleaning lady. Abigail Riddihough's interpretation of Degas's Miss La La At The Cirque Fernando replaces a suspended acrobat with a set of false teeth on a rope. "Every time I saw that picture," she explains, "I couldn't help thinking, 'Yes, but what happens next?'" But the most moving and effective piece is the simplest: Cheiko Imai's installation of Picasso's Child With A Dove. She paints the little girl's image on the wall and gives her real trainers and a ball to play with, suggesting the child has just run out of the room.



Artists have always plundered the past for ideas. "Why, after the great masters, do people try to do anything again?" Bacon once mournfully remarked. Projects such as this ensure the National Gallery does not become a mausoleum of Western art, but a space for living paintings to inspire living artists.

"To me there is no past or future in art," Picasso once said. "If a work of art cannot always live in the present, it must not be considered at all." What would he have made of Imai's version of Child With A Dove?

Paragons of dumbness

CINEMA
Jonathan Romney

IN THE great debate about cultural dumbing-down, cartoon cretins Beavis and Butt-head are often singled out as Antichrists, emblems of all that's most debased in contemporary pop culture. But at the press preview of their debut movie, the cinema was crammed with more highbrow cultural journalists and zeitgeist critics (Leavis and Barthes-heads, as it were) than would have turned out for a new Godard film. Quite right, too — **Beavis And Butt-head Do America** is not only the most entertaining recent release in Britain, but arguably the only one that stands up to intellectual scrutiny.

A mainstay of rock network MTV, Mike Judge's cartoon series is really a Trojan horse offering MTV viewers a grotesque mirror-image of themselves. Goggle-eyed dorks of indeterminate age, Beavis and Butt-head sit rooted to their sofa, sniggering at heavy metal videos, leering at babes and indulging in the most basic humour. And yet, at heart, they're merciless satirists, paragons of dumbness who mock dumbness. They deflate not only authority but also the pretensions of pop counter-culture. They're diametrically opposed to the dominant Cool Canon of shades, hip-hop and Tarantino movies; their idea of cool never rises above toilet level.

To sustain a full-length film, Judge has come up with a premise that turns the series on its head. The boys' TV set is stolen, so they are obliged to turn their attention for the first time to the outside world.

A hood mistakes them for paid killers and employs them to "do" his wife. They typically assume they're being offered sex, and eagerly set out on an odyssey into the heart of American naffness. The road movie tradition is decisively dismantled. Unlike the generations of Beat pilgrims and easy riders whose tracks they follow, B & B learn nothing and see nothing en route.

They fail to notice an imposing natural geyser — they're too awestruck at the nearby electronic toilets. At a petrified forest, they can't get over the fact that "wood" is American slang for erection. Blind to all around them, they literally can't see the trees for the wood.

The boys may be the butt, huh huh, of our laughter, but because they're so doggedly impervious to ridicule, the joke is really on us. Like it or not, Judge's heroes are determined to drag the world and us down to their own level. They always have the last word, and that word is invariably "Huh".

For all the attention currently given to US independent filmmakers, it may be that the most far-reaching depiction of contemporary America is actually to be found in the current crop of "dumb" comedies. Film historians of the future may end up taking the pulse of nineties America not from Pulp Fiction, but from Beavis And Butt-head Do America. And why not? I'd say America is fairly comprehensively "done" here.

Bertrand Blier's films don't get any easier, even as they become less fashionable. Over the years, he has milked every imaginable subject for uneasy black-comedy: adultery, murder, transvestitism, under-age sex. Sometimes it's worked brilliantly, sometimes he's come grievously unstuck — his last British release, 1991's Merci La Vie, made you cringe with its awkward parallels between Aids and the Holocaust.

Plenty of viewers will be offended by **Mon Homme**, in which Blier turns his attention to the French myth of the happy hooker. Anouk Grinberg plays Marie, a young prostitute who enjoys her job, and claims to sell "real love". One day, she takes in Jeannot (Gérard Lanvin), a derelict, plies him with passionate sex, then cleans him up and appoints him her pimp.

MISOGYNY is a given with Blier, if we can't accept that, then we don't get beyond first base with his films. Even so, there's something exceptionally uneasy about this story of an independent woman who can't wait to surrender her freedom to the least likely candidate. The film is particularly uncomfortable to watch in view of Blier's perverse director-actress relationship with Grinberg, his own partner. It's doubtful that any actress's body was ever filmed so fetishistically. But Grinberg gives a remarkable, intense performance that somehow contrives to project pure sexuality as a form of higher intelligence.

What makes the film most provocative is Blier's directing style. Elaborately theatrical sets and a static, dream-like atmosphere turn the action into a Brechtian fairytale. Ultimately, Blier makes familiar points: society is based on prostitution, all identity is play-acting, and only a haircut and an Armani suit divide bum from pimp. But he twists these notions just enough to make his closing moral that little bit more perplexing.

Wilde about boys

Simon Callow

Andre & Oscar and the Gay Art of Living
by Jonathan Fryer
Constable 320pp £20

BY ONE of those familiar reverses of literary fortune, of the names of the two men who figure in this book's title, it is that of Oscar Wilde which resounds by far the loudest, though only 30 years ago the opposite would have been true. Gide in his Oscar Wilde: In Memoriam (1950) adopts the tone, *de haut en bas*, of one of the victors of literary history towards one of the losers. Does anybody read Gide today? In English, at any rate? Half a dozen of his novels remain in print, as well as his journals, though not, interestingly, his confessional autobiography If It Dies . . . But it seems unlikely that young men and women of today would read them as unputdownable explorations of the moral universe, which is certainly what they meant to me at that age. Elegant and scrupulously intelligent though they are, they have little to say to our premillennial world, whereas Wilde, for so long considered a brilliant buffoon whose survival as a writer was largely attributed to the notoriety of his trials and imprisonment and a few wonderful jokes, seems altogether more striking both as a thinker in permanent revolt against the values of his time and as a proponent of the doctrine of redemption through the flesh.

Wilde is, to put it bluntly, the bigger man, although curiously enough André & Oscar is one of the few works about him in which the author seems not to have fallen in love with his subject. Jonathan Fryer has chosen the relatively brief relationship between the two men to illuminate the lives of both; in particular, the sex lives of both. They met in Paris in 1891 when Gide was 21 and Wilde, on the brink of his relationship with Bosie Douglas, was swanning around in the salons of Mallarmé and Heredia (with great success, despite Whistler's wicked telegram warning Mallarmé against the Irishman: "Preface propositions. Forewarn disciples. Precaution: familiarity fatal. Hide the pearls.") For Parisian literary society, Wilde as a writer was a somewhat unknown quantity; his impact was above all personal, physical and conversational, and his interlocutors vied with each other in describing his presence. "An Asian Bacchus . . . some Roman Emperor . . . a great priest of the moon in the time of Heliogabalus . . . the prince of some fabulous realm of the North."

Gide, already a published author but still an anguished virgin, on the rack between his Protestant conscience and his burning loins, was overwhelmed by Wilde, both as a personality and as a philosopher. Wilde, not drawn to the young man sexually, was impelled to deflower him intellectually. Within days of meeting him, Gide's world-view had been turned upside down. Wilde systematically and almost sadistically challenged Gide's commitment to the idea of Truth in art, or for that matter in life. "You have to understand that there are two worlds: one of them *is*, without people speaking about it. We call that *the real world*, because there is no need to speak about it in order to see it. And the



'Within days of meeting Oscar Wilde (right), André Gide's world-view had been turned upside down'

other is the world of Art. That's the one you do have to speak about, because otherwise it wouldn't exist." Gide told Valéry that Wilde was "piously setting about killing what remained of my soul, because he says that in order to know the essence of something, one has to suppress it".

This is Wilde as Lord Henry Wooton. Gide wrote in large letters across two pages of his diary the single word WILDE! He had, of course, to escape him, which he did, both geographically and intellectually. Later, by extraordinary coincidence, they met in Algeria, where Gide had finally, but secretly, surrendered to his desire for very young men; Wilde and Bosie, like Halliwell and Orton 70 years later, were up to their necks in sexual tourism, and Wilde, again in Mephistophelean mode, sensing the strain in the younger man, casually asked Gide whether he wanted the young musician to whom they were listening. Gide gasped "Yes," and Oscar, thrilled to play the pander, arranged it with much flourish and subterfuge, and the course of Gide's future sex life was set.

The two met again, in Berneval on the Normandy coast, where Gide went to visit Wilde shortly after his release from jail, and occasionally in Paris, during the last chaotic days of Wilde's life, when he had given in completely to the destiny of a *poète maudit*, awash, like the Verlaine whom he came so closely to resemble, with boys and booze, toothless, blotchy, grossly fat, yet still able at a moment's notice to charm his interlocutors with a joke or a fable, prior to touching them for a few francs. Gide pulled fastidiously away from Wilde, terrified at being connected with the scandal that Wilde so actively courted, but also noting that he had lost the lustre, the aura of success, which had been such a central part of his impact on the young writer.

Gide was haunted by Wilde all his life, and managed to work out some of his complicated feelings towards him in the characters of Menalque in Les Nourritures Terrestres and Saul in his play of that name; Gide, for Wilde, was charming and pleasant but ultimately disappointing as an artist. "To be an Egoist, one must have an ego," he wrote of him — brutally, but not without justification. In fact, neither man, working out his sexual path through life, comes out of Fryer's book well. Robert Ross, Alfred Douglas and Wilde passing round schoolboys between them on dirty weekends, Bosie and Gide having sex with 12- and 13-year-old Arab boys, and all of them having compulsive and constant recourse to rent boys, match the worst excesses of the Paedophile Information Exchange.

But it is in the treatment of their wives that both Wilde and Gide are simply indefensible. At least Wilde was, as far as we know, ignorant of the nature of his real appetites when he married Constance Lloyd, but Gide's Madeleine was deceived from the very beginning of their relationship, and slowly withered away as a human being. Her consignment of all his letters to her to the river, and her distribution of every present he had ever given her to her friends as the truth slowly dawned, make painful reading.

Fryer has written a sobering book in a sober style involving a considerable amount of discursive, but fascinating, material. In particular, it shines a new and not altogether flattering light on Wilde that gives those of us who love him — and still love him, despite the evidence here — pause for thought.

Slumber merchants

Steve Cook

The House of Sleep
by Jonathan Coe
Viking 352pp £17

GREGORY Dudden, an obsessive psychiatrist who runs a sleep clinic in Jonathan Coe's new novel, has built a complete personal and political philosophy around his admiration for Lady Thatcher's reputed ability to get by with only two or three hours' sleep a night. He tells his patient Terry, an insomniac film critic who gets even less rest than the former PM, that he despises the stuff and regards it as a plague: "Sleep puts even the strongest people at the mercy of the weakest and most feeble . . . That's exactly what it is: the great leveller. Like fucking socialism."

Gregory has always linked sleep with power and control, and when his clifftop clinic with its keening seagulls was a university hall of residence 12 years earlier, he shared a room there with a girlfriend called Sarah and would stand over her as she slept, sometimes pressing on her eyeballs with finger and thumb.

So he's definitely a weirdo now, destined for the funny farm after a comic and distressing climax in the laboratory to the strains of Nessun dorma, but the problems the other characters have with sleep and dreams are hardly less formidable.

Sarah, for instance, often can't tell the difference between her dreams and reality, something which has momentous consequences for Robert, another student who falls helplessly in love with her just as she decides to take up with Veronica, aka Ronnie, a "political lesbian".

As for Terry, his problem in the earlier phase of the story — all the main characters, by dint of sometimes tortured coincidences, appear in both phases — was that he was addicted to dreams and slept for 16 hours a day. It's suggested that the less he sleeps, the more productive and successful he becomes, but quality and moral content go down somewhat: so sleep, *pace* Gregory, may be a good thing; providing you don't — as Terry does through no fault of his own — end up in a coma.

One result of all this is that you get to learn about narcolepsy, cataplexy, hypnagogic hallucinations, somniloquising, somnambulism, and pre-sleep dreaming, and you watch these conditions playing havoc with the characters' lives. Sleep is seen in its personal, social, moral, political, physiological and psychological aspects, and even the structure of the book follows the pattern of sleep, through stages one to four, and, finally, to REM sleep — the really refreshing kind with the kind of eye-rolling which Lady Thatcher reserved for her waking life.

Eyelids drooping? They shouldn't be. This is Jonathan Coe's fourth novel, and he handles this challenging material with great confidence and lightness of touch. The complex structure may creak a bit sometimes, but what matters is that you are always swept onwards and over the page by the skill, verve and range of the writing. The pace and weight of the narrative is impeccably judged.

Running through the story is the debate about sleeping and dreaming — is sleep the source of our sanity or a dreadful waste of time, and do our dreams mislead us or show us the way to go? But the ambiguities of sleep are linked to those of gender, which give the novel its tension and final twist: sexual ambiguity standing in the way of people who love each other, leading them to do what may be the wrong thing when the pain they feel stops them from communicating.

The novel is salted with dry observation and comic set-pieces: the dislocated sparring of student conversations, the cock-up over footnotes which gets Terry the sack from Frame magazine, and — best of all — the restaurant scene where the tyro American film producer Joe Kingsley displays his ignorance of arthouse films. Terry asks him if he likes tortelloni, and — having earlier got into difficulties with Pasolini — Joe replies: "Sure I do. Especially the early black and white ones."

If you would like to order this book at the special discount price of £13 contact Books@The Guardian Weekly (see advert right)

Punch-drunk wisdom

Geoff Dyer

Cold Snap
by Thom Jones
Faber 228pp £6.99pb

WHEN one of Thom Jones's characteristically wired protagonists — they're all "crazy, running on nerves" — winds down his car window "the hefty scent of gardenia hit[s] him in the face". A few moments later he looks back over his shoulder and catches "a faceful of the 8.30am sun".

It's hard to imagine a character's experience providing more explicit testimony to his creator's style. Jones writes in-your-face prose. It's exciting and unnerving to read, partly because it is so close to being terrible. Close to the worst sub-post-Hemingway, white-macho prose you can ever read.

This guy has no control, you think, he's an adolescent; but you keep giving him the benefit of the doubt. And the more you read the deeper the conviction grows that he is not only a quirkily gifted, exceptionally powerful writer, but a vital one too.

In the course of this century the ideal of timeless eloquence has been worn down by the no less demanding ideal of the tellingly defective, by the search for an authentic literary idiom of illiteracy. A highly wrought inarticulacy is the intention, and the maimed vets and Dostoevsky-reading, punch-drunk fighters featured in Jones's debut collection A Pugilist At Rest embodied it uncompromisingly.

In Cold Snap he's extended his range while staying within that essential register. A lot of the characters in these stories are doctors, but they all sound like pugilists (a traffic jam, for one of these MDs, is "a goddam sumbitchin' motherfucker"). A lot of these doctors are burnt-out cases, working in — or not-so-fresh back from — Africa.

In terms of Jones's imaginative topography it's a logical place for them to have wound up: it takes them up to and beyond the edge of the comprehensible. The world assaults and batters Jones's characters but from this battering emerges that damaged poetry and punchy wisdom that he is always trying to bring to light, no matter how dense the darkness he has to dig through to get at it.

How to get ahead and be a nobody

Adam Phillips

Autobiographies
by R S Thomas
Dent 192pp £20

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES is an autobiography deeply suspicious of anybody who would write one; of anyone, that is to say, who would make a claim for himself. "Who does he think he is? was the murmur he would hear from time to time. But he didn't know who he was. He was no one." Thomas's answer here — and the answer which is this book — is characteristically canny.

The writer makes a claim on our attention not to assert his value but to discover it. And the bald belief that he is no one, which has always been the still centre of Thomas's grand, severe poetry, is neither a boast here, nor any part of what Thomas calls "the strange desire to be fashionable". Thomas has nothing to tout in his writing — no amazing personality, or astonishing adventures — but a brusque humility and a fierce attention to his two obscure objects of desire: God, and his native country, Wales.

The people in this book — his parents, his wife, his son and indeed himself — are minor characters, there, virtually, to sustain the drama of Thomas's chosen triangle. A God Thomas can only hope for; Wales and her "old language" — the mother-tongue he only learns when he is 30 — he longs for as a redemptive presence. And himself whom he would often rather do without.

The three autobiographical pieces and the one lecture, "The Creative Writer's Suicide", that make up this oddly moving book are the story of an uneasy fit between Thomas's two vocations as poet and priest, and a materialistic culture that values neither of these things in the ways he would wish. Without God we are all fashion victims; and without a poetry rooted in a native language there is, in Thomas's view, the all too bearable lightness of being of the modern world.

The question that haunts Thomas's costive, eloquent poetry — and that lurks in every sentence of this determinedly unextravagant book of prose — is, what gives words their gravity? How do they keep faith with the things that matter? Thomas is unusual as a writer because he still believes in a seriousness that doesn't need irony to keep itself going. His pieties are not tricks, but acknowledgments of mystery. If high seriousness seems like something of a high-wire act these days, Thomas never gives us the impression that he is trying to pull something off. Autobiographies is not a stunt.

Under a Welsh sky . . . R S Thomas, poet and strident nationalist PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS THORPE

"He was on the whole a happy boy," Thomas writes of the strangely impersonal third person who is the nominal subject of his book. "At least that is what he told himself after reaching adulthood." Why he might have needed to tell himself (or the reader) this: or why indeed a poet as unstagy as Thomas should need — and borrow from Yeats — the plural of his title is never explained. But it is part of the fascination and the irritation of this ferociously modest book that he explains so little and says so much; both by the book's puzzled candour and its occasional bathos.

It is not that explanation doesn't interest Thomas, but that it doesn't get him where he wants to go. It is the mysteries of creation and faith — whether the poet can avoid writing an elegy for God — that have always preoccupied him, not the causes of personality. By being so unpsychological, by nature as it were, not by design, Autobiographies shows us the gains and losses of having replaced theology with psychology as the preferred vocabulary for describing our lives. So while these autobiographies aspire, on the one hand, to be a kind of traditional Wordsworthian "growth of the poet's mind" it is not really the mind — and certainly not the body — that Thomas is tempted by. It is not his idiosyncrasies that fascinate Thomas, the flourishings and failings of his "self", but rather, what kind of world God reveals to him, and what kind of God he might be who makes such revelations. Thomas, in other words, makes no claims in this book to be admirable, lovable, or of any special interest. And it is this that gives this book a kind of eerie charm.

THOMAS makes it very clear in Autobiographies that he doesn't think his preferences — for Wales and the Welsh language, for nuclear deterrence, for the bird life of the Llyn Peninsula, for literature and austerity — make him important. And yet the stark and disturbing thing about this book is the occasional violence of its humility. There are descriptions of the natural world here that are as poignant and cheering as anything in Keats's letters or Gerard Manley Hopkins's journals. But along with this fervent wonder there is Thomas's strident nationalism, his increasingly insistent bitterness about the "English oppression", the very real depredations of the English language invasion of Wales. It sometimes seems in this book that Thomas's hatred of the English and their "thin language", in which he has written most of his poetry, performs a divided duty.

On the one hand, it is an impassioned redress of an abiding historical injustice. On the other, he feels for the English the sour resentment he can never quite let himself feel for a God who is too absent. "Disgust tempered by an exquisite/Charity, wrapping life's claws/In purest linen", Thomas's poem "A Poet" begins, unwrapping the pretences of art and charity, and the romantic convention of Thomas as a poet, in one fell swoop.

Thomas has used his poetry to keep his contempt at bay; in his Autobiographies he too often relishes it. Without satire, contempt is dulling. His righteous disdain in this book for a too-far fallen world, what he calls "the whole pageant of mankind with its fantasies, its whims and its tricks" is not engaging. But, at its best, the plain subtleties of Thomas's language outwit his prejudices. Autobiographies is a necessary parallel text to Thomas's great Collected Poems. It is also, by the same token, an autobiography from another country.

Hazards of the House

Julian Critchley

Commons Knowledge:
How to be a Backbencher
by Paul Flynn
Seren 165pp £6.95

PAUL FLYNN has been paid a backhanded compliment by Simon Hoggart, who described him as "the thinking man's Denis Skinner". With an eye to the main chance worthy of some Tory MPs in the last Parliament, he has brought out a guide to the Commons for the newly elected Labour MP.

Have we not seen photographs of them all, reinforced by over 100 members of the "monstrous regiment", standing smugly in New Palace Yard? I cannot get over the thought of 125 women MPs safe in the Mother of Parliaments; in my day, when I was first elected in 1959, we had to make do with Dame Irene Ward.

The days when the House of Commons could safely be described as "the best club in London" are now plainly over. The Palace of Varieties resembles a large inner-city comprehensive in which the staff have been caught by the camera mid-way between strikes.

What will become of the Smoking Room, that "Holy of Holies" which even Margaret Thatcher in her prime was chary of entering? When she did so, silence fell; and then some obsequious little tick would sidle up to her and offer her a drink. She invariably drank weak whisky and, in return, generously dispensed opinion to all and sundry.

Thank God I am no longer an MP. I can see the Smoking Room, to which the whole of the 1922 committee, led by Sir Marcus "Compo" Fox, its late and unlamented chairman, would adjourn at 6.10 on Thursday evenings. Nicholas Soames would hold court in one corner, surrounded by his many cronies. Nick Budgen would hang around hoping that someone would invite him to have a drink. "Someone" invariably did, as Nick was always good value.

The Chief Whip, either the youthful Richard Ryder or the butlerian Alastair Goodlad, would stand at the bar, encouraging younger members to unburden themselves. Julian Amery would talk of the war, while Bill Cash, the biggest bore in Europe, would soon find himself talking to the curtains.

When I first entered New Palace Yard, driving my Ford Popular and wearing a £10 Burton's suit, I was left to sink or swim. But sooner or later, while at lunch or dinner, some nice old thing would let fall some pearl of wisdom, eg, "Alcohol and adultery are the two occupational hazards of life in this place", or "If you must have a woman on the side, for God's sake pick one with as much to lose as yourself".

Now, Mr Flynn, an avowed Republican, writes a manual or handbook to the workings of Parliament as if the institution were no more than a Vauxhall car. Send a copy to your newly elected Labour MP by all means, but please leave what is left of the Tories out of it.

Sir Julian Critchley was a Tory MP for 31 years.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Brownout on Breadfruit Boulevard, by Timothy Mo (Paddleless, £6.99)

MO CAUSED a stir with this a couple of years ago by announcing that he was publishing it himself. Was it, people wondered, because of the description, detailed and *con brio*, of coprophilia that opens the novel? Coupled with the title — although a "brownout" is actually a less severe form of power blackout some were quick to jump to conclusions of an irresponsible and possibly defamatory nature. When a character says that "Breadfruit Boulevard" is "the local equivalent of 'the Hershey Highway' " — that is, the rectal passage as considered for the purposes of sexual gratification — it's comedy, nothing to get worked up about. Or was it because the novel wasn't that good? Rest assured that the novel is good. Brownout plunks us bang up against the ringside of Filipino politics. It's a bewildering picture of corruption and venality, a shifting landscape of ambiguous morals and skewed allegiances, through which we're carried, like someone being hauled along at the end of a tow-rope, by the strength and the disciplined yet exuberant comedy of Mo's prose.

Twilight in Italy and Other Essays, by D H Lawrence (Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics, £8.99)

I CAN'T SAY I'm mad about Lawrence, although a TV adaptation of The Rainbow did allow me to see something I'd wanted to since 1976, viz. Imogen Stubbs's birthday suit, so I should be grateful. These travel essays are almost as much fun, written between 1912 and 1915, when travelling around the Alpine region, crossing boundaries and regions of loyalty at a crucial point of history. No wonder his voice could be so apocalyptic, so full of the roaring in his head. Superb edition.

Plagues, by Christopher Wills (Flamingo, £8.99)

IF YOU have a hazy understanding of genetics, you might think that plagues are stupid. I mean, why do they think it's so clever to kill their hosts? This book explains why. He is good on the history of disease (tough on germs, tough on the causes of germs, you might say). Anyone who can call *Treponema pallidum*, the organism responsible for syphilis, "a nebbish of a parasite" is clearly worth listening to.

Badenheim 1939, by Aharon Appelfeld (Quartet, £7)

APPELFELD is one of the greatest writers of the age, in that he manages to write about the century's worst subject — the Shoah — with an insight and a perspective that make him not so much a "good writer" as someone who *has* to be read by anyone with an interest in the end of civilisation.



Norfolk's untamed melody

Mark Cocker

IN A region famous for its diversity of landscape, Norfolk is surprisingly poor for woodland. One notable exception, however, is Wayland Wood, the inspiration for Charles Kingsley's 19th century story Babes In The Wood. Although it would now be difficult for anyone to get lost in Wayland's meagre 34 hectares, what it lacks in size it makes up for in age.

Currently managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve, the area was a working wood for more than 1,000 years, utilised for its crops of hazel, ash and oak. The Domesday Book indicated its importance even in the 11th century, when the surrounding area drew its name from the wood. The word, Wayland, further enshrines its antiquity, deriving from the ancient Norse *lándr*, meaning grove or sacred grove. Then there are also the many physical indicators of its long history, like the stumps of coppiced beech and ash trees that are several metres in circumference and may well have been first cut 500 years ago. But the trees that produced their original seeds could well have stood when King Alfred burnt his cakes, or as King Canute tried to hold back the sea.

Other signs of Wayland's maturity are the magnificent stands of flowers. The more stable a woodland habitat, generally the greater the abundance and the higher the floral diversity. At the moment the most powerful visual expressions of this are the great swathes of bluebells that currently fill the air with the scent of hyacinths. And as well as being able to see and smell this immense past, one can also hear it. For mature woods like Wayland hold the greatest densities of breeding birds. Come here as dawn breaks and their songs pour forth with as much physical impact as the light itself.

This dawn chorus offers me a sense of connection not only through time but also through space. For as I stand surrounded by the melodies of blackbirds and thrushes and warblers, I try to recall how these species are actually singing nationwide. In fact, the dawn chorus is continent-wide, passing every day in a great cycle around the northern hemisphere. As the sun shines down on North America, then Asia, Europe and North Africa, so the birds renew in waves their vocal statements about territory and sexual potency.

At its height in late May, only the Bering Strait interrupts a continuum of song involving hundreds of millions of voices. Only on the Russian shores of this 1,000km channel will the songsters be isolated from the general fanfare further east. The dawn chorus, so rich at Wayland Wood, is one of this planet's most extraordinary performances — a symphony of sunlight and the urge for life's renewal transmitted through birds.

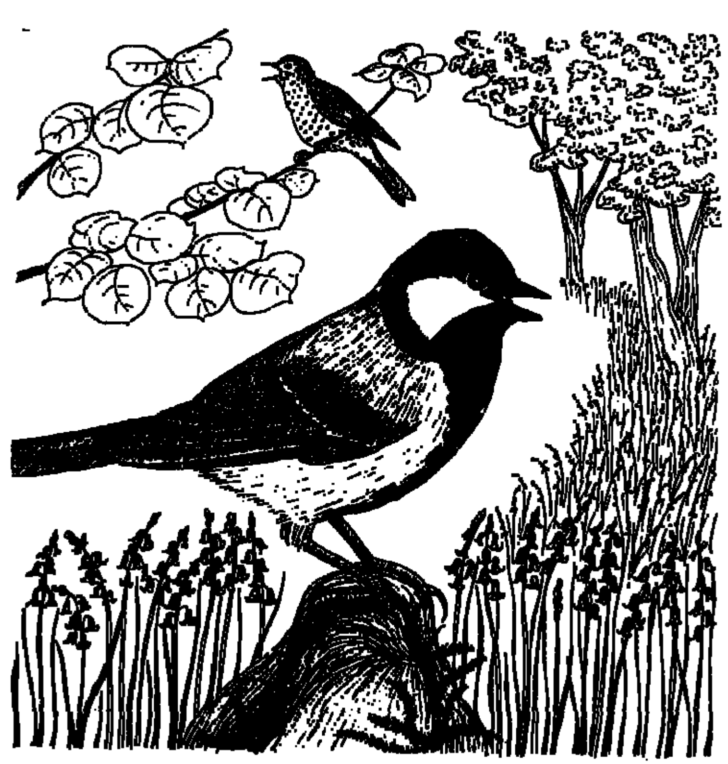


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

In Patrick Leigh Fermor's book on Greece and Greek culture, Mani, he described a nighttime visit to the Acropolis, where a friend imitated a cockerel's crow and then provoked a response by real cockerels around Athens. From this genuine experience Fermor constructed a brilliant passage in which he imagined the replies to his friend's clarion call rippling out across Europe and beyond until the message is carried to the ends of the earth.

The difference between Fermor's global chain of cock crows and the dawn chorus is that one was a flight of fantasy, the other a reality. It happens every morning for the next few weeks.

So, go on. Treat yourself. Struggle out of bed at three in the morning, go to an area of natural habitat — preferably some mature woods like Wayland — and connect yourself to the greatest song on Earth.

Chess Leonard Barden

GARRY Kasparov wants a rematch, but the damage is done. The IBM super-computer Deep Blue's 3½-2½ victory over the all-time best human was the first match defeat of Kasparov's life, and this after seven world-title contests plus several candidates and training matches. And the final grisly 19-mover (which will appear on this page next week) was much the fastest defeat of his adult career. Nor was it a case of an aging champion in decline, for Kasparov, now aged 34, is at the height of his powers.

In his defence, game one gave him a false sense of security and encouraged him to continue bizarre anti-computer strategies with pawns strung along the third rank. He has never before resigned in a drawn position as he did in game two; and rarely ever transposed two moves in the opening as he did in the fatal sixth game. Deep Blue psyched him to defeat, just as Kasparov himself has psyched so many human rivals.

Kasparov v Deep Blue

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 Bg4 3 b3 Already an odd choice: when Korchnoi played so in the first round at Enghien against Etienne Bacrot, the 14-year-old promptly exchanged Bxf3 and capitalised on White's wrecked pawn front.

Nd7 4 Bb2 e6 5 Bg2 Ngf6 6 0-0 c6 7 d3 Bd6 8 Nbd2 0-0 9 h3 Bh5 10 e3 h6 11 Qe1 Qa5?! Most GMs would prefer the centralising Qe7 with options of Ba3 or a5-a4.

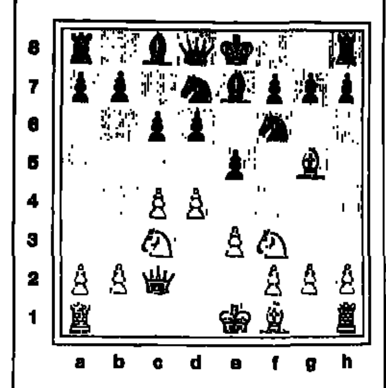
12 a3 Bc7?! Also odd, as the B later heads for the natural square c5 with loss of tempo. **13 Nh4 g5** Kasparov laughed at this, but Deep Blue wants to stop 14 f4 with initiative and Black's Q and Bc7 offside. Perhaps 13 g4 Bg6 14 Nh4 was more accurate for Kasparov, whose next dozen moves are mainly unimpressive knight regroups.

14 Nhf3 e5 15 e4 Rfe8 16 Nh2 Qb6 17 Qc1 a5 18 Re1 Bd6 19 Ndf1 dxe4?! This could be delayed. **20 dxe4 Bc5 21 Ne3 Rad8 22 Nhf1 g4 23 hxg4 Nxg4 24 f3 Nxe3 25 Nxe3 Be7 26 Kh1 Bg5 27 Re2 a4?!** The pin on the WQ encourages Deep Blue to start an ultimately fatal forcing sequence. Black's K-side has some holes but White's set-up is passive so Nc5!? followed by f6 and Ne6, eyeing d4 and f4, looks logical.

28 b4 f5 29 exf5 e4 30 f4! Kasparov played this intuitively, relying on his K-side passed pawns. He is exploiting Deep Blue's horizon effect, which makes it harder for computers than humans to assess such a long-term strategic concept.

Bxe2 31 fxg5 Ne5 32 g6 Bf3 33 Bc3 Qb5 34 Qf1! Qxf1+ 35 Rxf1 h5 36 Kg1 Kf8 b5 and Kg7 at once is better. **37 Bh3 b5 38 Kf2 Kg7 39 g4 Kh6 40 Rg1 hxg4 41 Bxg4 Bxg4 42 Nxg4+ Nxg4+ 43 Rxg4 Rd5 44 f6 Rd1 45 g7 Resigns**

No 2474



Jim Plaskett v Jon Mestel, British championship 1990. Play continued 1 . . . Ng4 2 h3 exd4 3 Bxe7 Qxe7 4 Nxd4 Nh6 with advantage to White, who went on to win game and title. Can you find the strong move missed by both grandmasters?

No 2473: 1 d3 e5 2 Kd2 e4 3 Kc3 exd3 4 b3 dxe2 5 Kb2 exd1N mate.

Quick crossword no. 368

Across

1 Interviewed for report after mission (9)
8 Maltreat (5)
9 Implement for practical use (7)
10 Honour with a medal (8)
11 Record (4)
13 Pointer (6)
14 Attractive piece of metal (6)
16 Simple — piece of cake (4)
17 Severe (8)
19 Capital of Iran (7)
20 Send out — children (5)
21 Condition causing breathlessness (9)

Down

1 Gloomily (8)
2 Gift bestowed (6)
3 Likewise — a piece of information (4)
4 Clothes designing establishment (7,5)
5 Establishment selling unusual and imported foods (12)
6 Establishment selling horticultural goods (6,6)
7 Establishment selling meat (8,4)
12 Former English colony in North America (8)
15 Betrothed man (6)
18 Drunken revel (4)

Last week's solution

LEAD BLOWHOLE
A N E H P D
CLAP ATTITUDE
R O W H T S N
OZONELAYER
S N L L G S P
SADDLE POSTER
E A S C O O E
IFSANDBUTS
Q S A J S T S
ULTERIOR KIWI
I O G L S N
DEPLORED SHAG

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE Sunday game at the Town Club in New York attracts the world's best players, and the stakes are high, with ego as well as money on the line. A consoling tradition is that the winners of the final Chicago host the dinner — with the wine chosen often a reflection of those last four deals. On a recent visit, I cut Fred Chang for the last Chicago, a born winner at money bridge. Our opponents were the great Israeli Sam Lev — sometimes called the "Terrorist" for his reaction to his partner's mistakes — and the legendary Harry The Horse, fresh from his triumph in the Spingold tournament.

A small minus when our opponents made a part score on the first deal was followed by a much larger one when Sam and Harry made a small slam — vulnerable, needless to say — on the second hand. We were 15 points down already with just two hands to go — it looked as though we would be bought dinner, but at those stakes it looked as though we would need to be! Our opponents came out swinging on the third deal as well, for Harry The Horse opened with a weak 2♠ and was raised to 3♠ as a pre-emptive manoeuvre by his partner. Fortunately for us, Harry then broke discipline with a bid of 4♠, strictly taboo in the best circles.

After we had doubled and collected a penalty of 800, the Terrorist nearly burst a blood vessel as he pointed out in graphic terms the folly of his partner's actions. But we were still 700 points behind with one deal to play. Game all, dealer South:

North
♠AQJ2
♥AJ102
♦KQ42
♣J

West
♠109876
♥943
♦J1063
♣8

East
♠None
♥875
♦9875
♣AKQ963

South
♠K543
♥KQ6
♦A
♣107542

The bidding appears at the top of the next column.

Bursting with pride, Harry now devised a brilliant way to show his suit. Surely an "impossible" double of Blackwood would pinpoint an unusual lead to his partner, and what could be more unusual than clubs?

South	West	North	East
Zia	Lev	Chang	Harry
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass(1)
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass(2)
2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	4 NT	Dble(3)
Pass	Pass	Rdble	Pass
Pass	Pass		

(1) Slow. (2) Slower. (3) Harry had been dying to bid his club suit throughout the auction, hence his previous slow passes.

Alas for Harry, we rubber bridge players have no truck with modern conventions such as ROPI, where a redouble would show no aces.

I passed 4NT doubled round to Chang, who was delighted to redouble for blood. When Lev, not in tune with his partner's brilliant notion, found a heart lead, we scored a brisk 1,520 and had won an eight-point Chicago.

Of course, if Harry The Horse had simply passed over 4NT, we would have bid to the excellent but doomed six spades, as the Terrorist was not slow to point out. His steady flow of invective, though, did not dampen the exquisite taste of the Petrus we ordered at dinner. ©

Rugby Union Eastern Province XV 11 Lions 39

Lions show killer instinct

Robert Armstrong in Port Elizabeth

THE LIONS flew into the coastal resort of East London on Sunday confident they can sustain the high-pressure football that earned them a satisfying five-try victory in their opening match. Border, their next opponents, should give them sufficient licence to develop the explosive ball-in-hand movement that ultimately buried Eastern Province.

When the Lions were good they were very good indeed, producing a destructive fusillade of four tries in the last 18 minutes. But when they were mediocre — notably in the quarter-hour after the break when Deon Keyser scored the hosts' only try — the tourists indulged in some of the enduring bad habits of British rugby, going to ground with negative intent and often kicking aimlessly.

The Lions coaches Ian McGeechan and Jim Telfer will no doubt dissect these shortcomings in search of the 80-minute continuity required to survive against tougher opposition. But they had reason to be pleased with the passion of an untested side for which Jeremy Guscott scored two masterly tries and the No 8 Scott Quinnell dominated in the loose.

Most of the team appeared to have put a hard domestic season behind them, quickly forging the mental steel needed for this 13-match tour. Doddie Weir, the Scotland lock, was a revelation, pressuring the South Africans with remarkable gusto; the flankers Richard Hill and Lawrence Dallaglio looked like Test incumbents in the making; and among the backs Will Greenwood and the 66th-minute substitute Tony Underwood were sharp and full of creative running.

On the debit side there were ominous signs that Neil Jenkins and Gregor Townsend may have problems settling down at full-back and fly-half. The Welshman, after a three-month lay-off with a fractured arm, looked unfocused and lacked precision in his line-kicking, while Townsend needs time to recover his instinctive decision-making abilities.

Will to win . . . Greenwood keeps the ball moving during the Lions' opening tour match PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE HUTCHINGS

"We took a while to gain control but, when we did, it looked good," said Fran Cotton, the Lions manager. "Already we have shown we are determined to meet the demands of South African rugby."

The Lions developed a rapid tempo from the outset and but for a stray pass here and there they might well have scored a further 15 points. However, their inability to kill off Eastern Province by half-time motivated the host side to such a degree that they grabbed the lead with an exciting 49th-minute try.

According to Weir, "the middle period was difficult for us because we didn't maintain our early momentum. By that stage we knew line-out ball was difficult to win — things were quite disruptive on both sides."

Earlier, after a brief exchange of penalty goals between Jenkins and Theo van Rensburg, the Lions looked ready to open the floodgates when Townsend sent Guscott racing through a midfield gap to score at the posts. Yet a full half-hour went by without further points and, when they did materialise, Van Rensburg reduced the deficit to 10-6 with a 30-metre penalty.

Eastern Province toyed with the prospect of victory for 14 minutes of the second half but, when the dam burst, the invitation side were blown away. Quinnell set up the Lions' second try, driving off the base of the scrum before transferring to Weir, who fell over the line; two minutes after Underwood replaced Evans he weaved through the defence for a brilliant solo try; then Greenwood and Townsend combined sweetly to send Guscott arrowing to the posts; and Greenwood completed the rout by way of an Underwood pass two minutes from the end.

● In near-perfect goal-kicking conditions, Mark Mapletoft, English rugby's top points-scorer last season, missed four penalties in the last minutes as England slipped to an agonising 23-21 defeat against Buenos Aires in the second match of their Argentine tour. He had earlier taken over from the equally profligate Alex King.

Football Scottish Cup: Kilmarnock 1 Falkirk 0

All the Wright stuff

Patrick Glenn at Ibrox

ALEX TOTTEN could have used one of those painted smiles favoured by losing nominees at the Oscars as he watched his former team deny his present one in the Scottish Cup final.

Instead the Falkirk manager chose to adhere to the aphorism that it's no loss what a friend gets. As Totten embraced Paul Wright at the end of a colourful, sometimes pulsating and ultimately satisfactory final, it was not difficult to recall those stories told by hostages of the special relationship they have formed with their captors.

Wright, the Kilmarnock striker, had been Totten's principal torturer, recovering from an appearance-threatening injury in time to score the only goal and take the cup to Rugby Park for the first time in 68 years.

Both men knew what they owed each other. The manager had signed the player twice in recent years, bringing him to St Johnstone after a couple of hellish spells with Queens Park Rangers and Hibernian and, in turn, recruiting him to the Kilmarnock cause in 1995.

Wright had justified Totten's belief by becoming each club's most valuable asset, his goals and general leadership of the Kilmarnock attack in the last two seasons contributing hugely to keeping them in the Premier Division.

Totten, of course, was not there to enjoy the latest piece of escapology — when Kilmarnock stayed up by virtue of a last-day draw with Aberdeen — as he had been sacked by the club at the turn of the year and had begun sprinkling his stardust over Falkirk in the First Division. But he knew before the first whistle of the final that Wright would be his new side's most menacing adversary.

Most of the Falkirk support, however, left the ground convinced that they were unlucky, especially when a more spirited performance in the second half saw them get the ball in the net, only for Neil Oliver's effort to be disallowed for offside.

Kilmarnock, it must be said, had more quality, inventiveness and incisiveness. Even if they appeared to be less dominant after the break, they still created the two best chances of the half.

Andy Gray, the former Crystal Palace, Tottenham, Aston Villa and England midfielder, ran back and made a telling challenge on Kilmarnock's Jim McIntyre after he was released through the middle.

Alex Burke, the teenage winger, was also played in from the left by the veteran Gus MacPherson but drove the ball straight at Craig Nelson when a cut-back would surely have allowed the lurking Wright to score his second. Wright's finishing in the 21st minute was clinical. When Burke's corner was delivered from the right, Jamie McGowne and Scott McKenzie rose in the challenge, with the ball breaking off the latter and travelling across the area to Wright at the far post.

The striker slightly miscued with his right foot on the turn but the ball bobbled away from Nelson. Wright admitted it was not the sweetest contact he had ever made but added: "That's the kind that always seem to go in."

Kilmarnock's cup triumph is an extraordinary prize for their manager Bobby Williamson, who was happily learning the coaching trade with the club's youngsters when Totten's departure led to his being offered the caretakership only last December. The job is now his, with a new three-year contract agreed in the days before the final.

● England defeated South Africa 2-1 in their friendly international match at Old Trafford. Robert Lee and Ian Wright scored for Glenn Hoddle's side while Phil Masinga got the South Africans' consolation goal.

● All three divisional play-off finals at Wembley ended in 1-0 scorelines. David Hopkin secured Crystal Palace's return to the Premiership with a last-minute goal against Sheffield United. In the Second Division showdown, Crewe Alexandra defeated Brentford thanks to a Shaun Smith strike, while John Frain of Northampton Town sank Swansea City in the Third Division match.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Woosnam in easy Ryder seat

IAN WOOSNAM held off a strong challenge from Nick Faldo, Ernie Els and Darren Clarke to win his second Volvo PGA championship at Wentworth on Monday and clinch a certain place in the Ryder Cup team to play the United States in September. His 13-under-par total of 275 gave the Welshman a two-shot victory and $300,000 in prize money.

BRITISH sport is going for gold. Governing bodies who promise to improve their results at the Olympics and other international meetings were given nearly $15 million of National Lottery money last week. Another $50 million will be awarded in the coming months to fund an annual $65 million project.

Half of the money is aimed at boosting coaching and other grassroots development. The other half will be used to create a pool from which 4,500 young competitors will be able to claim up to $45,000 a year to meet their training, travel and education costs. Howard Wells, of the UK Sports Council, described it as a "sea-change in the way sport is both administered and funded".

ENGLAND cricketers were asked to sharpen up their image during this summer's Ashes confrontation with Australia. A 28-page handbook was issued to them which lists the do's and don'ts. Out go designer stubbles, floppy sun-hats and clothing and headgear worn on previous occasions. In comes a navy blue helmet. The change brought instant rewards for England who made a clean sweep in the Texaco one-day series *(see page 32)*.

SAEED ANWAR plundered 194 against India in Madras to set a world record in one-day internationals, beating Viv Richards's 189 for West Indies against England at Old Trafford in 1984. The 28-year-old lefthander hit 22 fours and five sixes off 147 balls. Pakistan, who scored 327, secured a 35-run win to join Sri Lanka in the three-match Independence Cup final.

THE Republic of Ireland moved up to second place in Group Eight of the World Cup qualifiers thanks to a 5-0 win over Liechtenstein before nearly 30,000 delirious supporters at Lansdowne Road, Dublin. A hat-trick in 12 minutes by 19-year-old striker David Connolly in the first-half provided the foundation for the runaway victory. They are home to Lithuania in August and have a real chance of qualifying if they can stay in second place behind Romania.

EVERTON are to leave Goodison Park after more than a century. A ballot of the club's supporters has shown overwhelming support for a move to a new 60,000 all-seat stadium on the outskirts of Liverpool. It is thought that the Merseyside club may be playing in a $115 million complex in Kirkby — four miles from Goodison Park — within four years.

SOUTHAMPTON were rocked by the resignations of Graeme Souness, their manager, and Lawrie McMenemy, their director of football, over lack of money to strengthen the team. With preparations to build a new $50 million stadium on the outskirts of the city at an advanced stage, the departure of two of the club's top men will throw the plans into serious disarray. Later, midfielder Matt Le Tissier was also reported to be considering his future at the south coast club. He was said to be unhappy over not being offered a new deal in spite of his 11 years of loyal service.

JACK ROBINSON, chairman of Wigan Warriors, fought off an attempt to remove him from the rugby club's board. At a meeting last week the majority of shareholders rejected demands for his head following a bitter row over the sale of Central Park to a supermarket chain, to clear the club's debts. A resolution demanding his removal was defeated by 484 votes to 400.

LINFORD CHRISTIE has been appointed as team captain of the English athletics team for the European Cup. The 37-year-old former Olympic and world 100m champion will lead the men's team in Munich this month before retiring from the international stage and handing over the captaincy to the Atlanta 400m silver medallist Roger Black for the world championships in Athens in August.

SPENCER OLIVER, from London, a professional boxer for only 27 months, stopped Martin Krastev of Bulgaria in the fourth round to win the European super-bantamweight title in North London.